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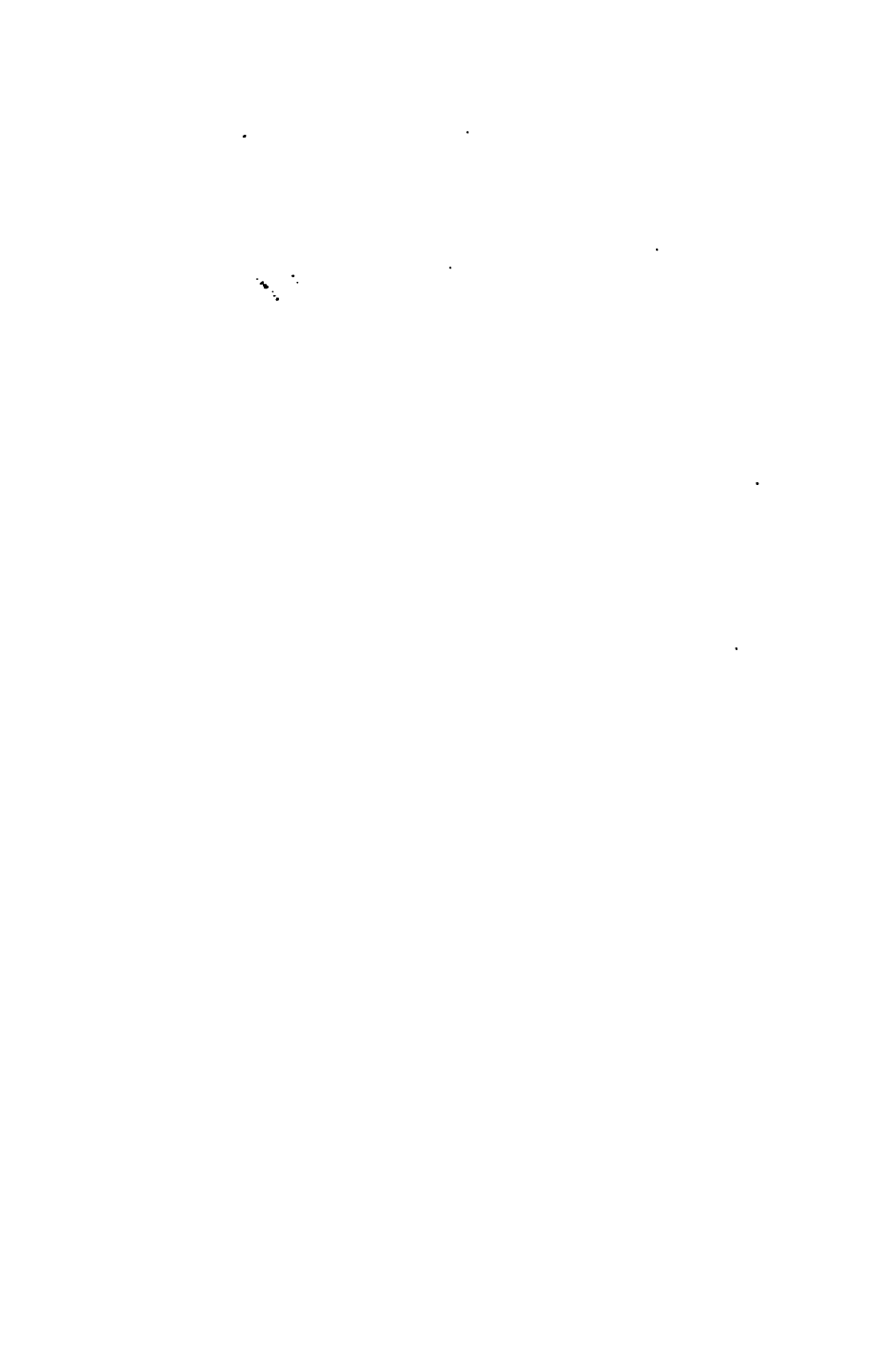
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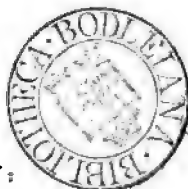
THE  
HISTORY OF THE REVIVAL AND PROGRESS  
OF  
INDEPENDENCY  
IN ENGLAND,  
SINCE THE PERIOD OF THE REFORMATION;

WITH  
AN INTRODUCTION, CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE PRINCIPLES OF INDEPENDENCY IN THE AGE OF CHRIST  
AND HIS APOSTLES, AND OF THE GRADUAL DEPARTURE  
OF THE CHURCH INTO ANTI-CHRISTIAN ERROR,  
UNTIL THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION.

BY  
JOSEPH FLETCHER,

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TO  
CHRISTIANS OF ALL COMMUNIONS  
THE  
FOLLOWING WORK  
IS  
**Dedicated;**  
AS  
AN HUMBLE ATTEMPT TO ELUCIDATE  
THOSE GREAT SCRIPTURAL  
PRINCIPLES,  
THE SPIRIT OF WHICH IS CHERISHED, MORE OR LESS,  
BY ALL  
WHO WORTHILY BEAR  
THE  
CHRISTIAN NAME.



## P R E F A C E.

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IT has been thought by some, and has even been intimated to the Author, that the present times are not exactly suited to the publication of such a work as the present. After endeavouring to ascertain the reasons for this opinion, in so far as they may be gathered, it is conceived that they resolve themselves into the following particulars:

1. The demands of the age upon the practical energies of Christians, in the diffusion of a simple gospel. 2. The divided state of the church, which seems to require a healing process, rather than one calculated to foment differences of opinion. 3. The temper of the times, which calls for deeds rather than words, in connexion with matters of religious duty and observance.—These appear to the Author to be the only, or at least the main, reasons for the opinion to which reference is made. After giving them the most serious consideration in his power, he is constrained to conclude that they are insufficient, and would bespeak the candid attention of the reader, while he endeavours to state the grounds on which he has arrived at this conclusion.

With respect to the *first*, it is admitted that the present age makes great and increasing demands upon the practical energies of Christian men. Happily, the cause of missions, whether abroad or at home, is so far advanced, that there can scarcely be any connexion with the Church of Christ, in any one of its several communions, without being

appealed to frequently, earnestly, and powerfully, in its support. But has not this always been the case more or less? and is it not likely to be so in future, for an indefinite period? Is it not a cheering fact, and a reason for the serious investigation of such subjects as the present, rather than otherwise? Does not ecclesiastical history—in part, at least, the theme of the present work—teach us the importance of diffusing scriptural views on the subject of the church's constitution, in connexion with all our evangelizing efforts? Was not missionary enterprise emphatically the work of the apostolic age? and did not the apostles and first Christians connect all their successes with the actual institution of certain fixed principles of church polity? Did they not plant churches on a certain definite foundation of ecclesiastical organization? Do not the records which meet us in our department of inquiry teach us, that in the ages succeeding the apostolic, the source of error in doctrine, and corruption in practice, is to be traced to a departure from the apostolic precedent, which combined the diffusion of doctrines with the institution of principles? Did not the spirit of missionary enterprise, of a certain kind, evangelize Europe, and bring the gospel to our shores? and was it not mainly on account of the want of a co-ordinate diffusion of scriptural church principles, that that gospel became so universally corrupted—so much so, as ultimately to retard its progress, and reduce the church into a mere worldly and hierarchical system of spiritual domination, from which the nations of Europe are not yet free, and against which the truth has yet to contend? And if it be so, is it not right that the most practical supporters of missions should seriously consider the question, whether the conquests of the gospel, in order to

be permanent, should not be connected with gospel institutions, a scriptural worship, and primitive practices?

With respect to the *second* point, it is admitted that the Church of Christ is, and for an almost indefinite period—reaching back into the past through centuries—has been, in a divided and distracted state, presenting anything but the aspect which an enlightened Christian desires to behold, or which the Word of God appears to sanction. It is also admitted that healing, rather than dividing measures, are demanded by such a state of things. So far from disapproving of the object, which some parties have set before them in the present day as the great thing to be aimed at, namely, the restoration of union, harmony, and peace, amongst all the sections of the Christian Church; the Author conceives it to be the very highest object presented to Christian faith and charity, in connexion with the church's temporal existence—an object which the Redeemer himself presented to the Father in his last intercessory prayer, before he suffered in the flesh, when he said, “that they all may be one, as I, Father, am one with thee, and thou with me; that they all may be perfect in one; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me, and that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” At the same time, is it not one of the most practical questions of the present age, and probably of ages to come, *how* this object may be realized? Is a mere meeting together of representatives from the various communions of the Christian church, while those communions themselves are practically separate from one another, all that is included in it? Is mere confederation unity, or a necessarily genuine symbol of unity? Is the oneness which Christ desires to see embodied, local, territorial,

national, earthly? Is it not rather spiritual, consisting in the universal diffusion of an identical faith without admixture of error—of hope without fear—of love without dissimulation? Is it possible for any great amount of real union to exist—such union as shall approve itself to Him who searches the heart—while there is a greatly multiplied variation in doctrine and discipline, temper and demeanour? Can the desired union be brought about by any action from without, in the mere combination for a season of large bodies of Christian men? Does not the union and harmony of the various portions of a plant, as a living whole, depend upon the circulation of a vital element, uniform in its nature and operation, throughout the whole? Whatever may be the importance of a charitable, peaceful, forbearing spirit, is this in itself adequate to the accomplishment of the desired end? Supposing that the profession of a desire for union amongst all parties were more general than it is; supposing that there were a genuine movement amongst all the members of all the sections of the Christian church towards a common centre, for the purpose of presenting to the world an aspect of unity; might not the world still ask if that unity were real—if it were anything more than mere display—if the various combining parties were really united on other occasions in all the common operations of denominational life? And supposing that such a question, asked under such circumstances, could not (probably enough!) be answered in the affirmative, what step would be needful on the part of the church, in order to satisfy a keenly scrutinizing world that a real union of all the members of Christ's body is not merely desirable, but also capable of being realized? Would it not be found needful *then* to inquire into

the real causes of sectional division? and would not a sincere and wise inquiry discover that, so long as revealed institutions and principles were departed from—so long as human expedients were substituted for Divine arrangements, it would be impossible for the various sections of the church to approach each other, except for purposes of display on public occasions? If it were possible for all parties to be brought to acknowledge as much as this, would not the necessity remain of discussing the very topics now brought before the Christian public; only with the possibility of producing fresh divisions, without any probability of their being speedily healed, in consequence of the disappointment of previous expectations? But all this is advanced on the supposition that a very general union of parties, for purposes of inquiry into the causes of difference, is a possible thing: may not this be a matter of very grave doubt? Has any plan of union been yet proposed with such an avowed object? or, if proposed, to any extent realized? Have any concerted operations been hitherto conducted, by parties whose relation to the universal church is more considerable than that of a few drops to the ocean? Do not the various denominations of Christendom, at the present time, appear to be separated from one another by walls of partition almost as strong, if not quite so high, as that which divided the Jew from the Gentile? Is not the distance between the Protestant and the Romanist almost as wide as possible? and whilst Romanism has her myriad variations under the semblance and theory of unity, has not Protestantism her variations also, without such semblance and theory?—What can be done in this lamentable state of things? Is a measure of union, necessarily partial, and between parties who ac-



tually differ from one another, capable of producing any very extensive change? Finally, is there not a book of *revelation*? and does it not speak in the name of God? Does it not discover the Divine will in respect to the organic principles of the Christian church, as well as in respect to doctrinal faith? May it not be the case, that the divisions of the church have been caused by a departure from that word? Nay, do not the inquiries collateral to our very subject teach us that such is the fact? And if so, do not the preliminaries of unity appear to be essentially connected with a return to scripture, and a fresh discussion in a calm and kindly spirit of scriptural principles? Must not the way of return to a primitive unity be the very converse of that which originally led to division? If the sheep of Christ's pasture, scattered abroad upon the mountains of separation, are ultimately to be brought back into one fold, must it not be by an universal return to the common centre from which they originally dispersed? Must not the way of return be clearly seen, before it can be entered upon? and is it possible for any very extensive union to take place until this is effected? The main object of the present work is to contribute some humble assistance to this very desirable end.

With respect to the *third* point, it is admitted that the temper of the present age is somewhat practical: calling for deeds rather than words. But is this a desirable state of things? Does it imply that the generality of Christian men, in their various denominations, are firmly settled down on a basis of perfect conviction? Is it to be inferred that doubt has given place to certainty—scriptural investigation to enlightened knowledge—and the processes of inquiry to the energy of resolve? Is there no fear of returning

errors? Does no peril threaten a primitive faith? Has heresy disappeared? Are the enemies of the truth all vanquished? Is anti-Christ annihilated? Can nothing more be done by words, to lead men to deeds—to vitalize them, and give them a permanently safe direction? Has the time come when it can no longer be said, “By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned?” Has the period arrived when there is no need for the exhortation, “Hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus;” “Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints?” Is it not possible for deeds to be performed in a mere mechanical manner? and may not excitement, or the practical habits of a commercial age, call for and stimulate to apparently Christian deeds, where there is but little of enlightened Christian motive? Have not some periods in the history of the church exhibited deeds of great daring, self-denial, and suffering, apparently in the name of Christ, when there has been as little as possible of the knowledge and diffusion of genuine Christianity? Were not the crusades against the Saracens on the one hand, and the Albigenses on the other, real deeds, and for avowedly Christian ends? Is not the Church of Rome now, and has it not been in every age, the most abundant in deeds—of a certain kind? And does it not become us, therefore, knowing these things, to be very careful lest, in the blind performance of deeds, there should be a departure from scriptural faith and scriptural principles, for the purpose of imparting which, Divine words have been pronounced and recorded, and for the purpose of fostering and perpetuating which, human words, echoing the Divine, have been ordained? We cannot do without words! They are the very life of action

—the very sinews of energy—the very guardians of truth! The great Head of the church Himself is revealed and known amongst his own disciples as the Word! The last command which he gave to His own apostles had reference to the word—in preaching and in teaching the truths He had communicated. In every age of the church, right words have been more powerful to accomplish the gracious purposes of God than any other kind of human instrumentality. They are capable of bearing in them, as mysterious vehicles, the spirit of the Infinite and Eternal, and of bringing that spirit to operate upon the souls of men. And if an age of activity, which is at the same time an age of division and of threatening error, is to be wisely directed and brought into a state of conformity to the will and designs of Christ, that end can be accomplished by words alone—words spoken and written—words truthful and powerful, rebutting error, attacking superstition in her strongholds, and leading men back to primitive doctrines and primitive institutions, in order that they may be brought to Christ.

On these grounds, then, it is thought that the opinion expressed at the commencement of this preface is not sound—is anything but sound—is indicative of an altogether erroneous view of the way in which the church is to be purified and enlightened, and the world to be saved. A conciliatory spirit is always right; but the truth as it is in Jesus is never ill-timed. The paramount question is—*Has God revealed His will to man? and does that revelation determine the principles according to which Christians are to unite together for purposes of worship, edification, and the ultimate evangelization of the world?* If so, it can never be an unseasonable thing to illustrate those principles, and call the

attention of those who have never known, or who have departed from them, to their real character and authority. If not, let such an opinion be shown by those who hold it, that both the church and the world may know how greatly the former has been deluded! The Author is one who believes in the former position, and seeks to give expression to the strongly-cherished convictions of his mind. He believes that, in this age of excitement and agitation, of diversity of opinion and of conflicting parties, the great thing needed is *positive* truth, and truth positively *Divine*. If any one thinks that he has it, it is his duty to bring it forward and submit it to the attention of the world. With *conciliation*, in reference to principles, truth has nothing to do; while *compromise*, in reference to principles Divinely revealed, is treachery to God. A mere stripling, divinely directed, slew with a sling and a stone Goliath of Gath; and the smallest and apparently weakest party, acting with faith under the same direction, may be enabled to accomplish the overthrow of the most gigantic and inveterate errors.

The Author commends the present work to the attention of the Christian world, with the fervent prayer that it may be rendered instrumental, in however humble a measure, to the confirmation of those who are already attached to the great principles of Christian liberty in all the extent of their operation as revealed from heaven; and to the production of sound convictions in the minds of those who have not as yet learned to appreciate them.



# ANALYTICAL TABLE

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### FIRST VOLUME

#### OF

## THE HISTORY OF INDEPENDENCY.

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**THE**  
**HISTORY OF THE REVIVAL AND PROGRESS**  
**OF**  
**INDEPENDENCY IN ENGLAND.**

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**INTRODUCTION.**

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**BOOK I.**

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRINCIPLES OF INDEPENDENCY**  
**IN THE AGE OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES.**



## CHAPTER I.

### PRELIMINARY EXPLANATIONS.

CHRISTIANITY is the last revelation from God to man. In the sublime language of the Apostle, it is "God speaking to us by his Son." Distinguished from all former revelations by its completeness in respect to the Divine character and purposes, it is not only the interpreter of all previous revelations, but in its own nature final. The Jewish religion in all its provisions anticipated a Divine manifestation, which should illustrate their meaning; the Christian religion contains within it that manifestation, and makes no promise of anything further or clearer for man in his present state.

As Judaism was an introductory system, it was confined to one out of the many nations of the earth; but Christianity, being a complete and perfected system, was designed for the whole world. The inferior economy which contained the "shadows of good things to come," needed not an universal enforcement; but the "good things" themselves are of such a nature as to concern the entire human race.

The object of the Christian revelation is, in fact, to restore mankind to God. The simple but sublime end which it proposes is to show how God, as the

supreme Ruler, and Father of the human family, has made arrangements by which the guilty can be restored to his favour, without detriment to his righteous government.

This end is accomplished, in so far as the revelation is concerned, by two classes of means—doctrines and institutions. The former are intended for man, considered as a spiritual being; the latter for man as a social being also. Were man a purely spiritual being, the former only would be needful in order to his salvation; but inasmuch as he is a tenant of flesh, and related by earthly ties to his fellow-mortals, the latter are of the highest practical moment.

The subject of the present work has to do with the latter of these two classes of means, and is one the importance of which has been felt more or less in every age of the Christian church. In the present day it is not only receiving revived attention, but is being investigated by many minds of the highest order, by sounder methods than have hitherto been used. The appliances of modern criticism are developing new truth in relation to it; and in proportion as the great results attending its elucidation are more distinctly seen, it is probable that it will become increasingly the fertile subject of study and discussion in forthcoming years.

Not, however, that it is of any importance in itself. The value of Christian institutions is wholly dependent on the Christian doctrines to which they are related, and for the purpose of exhibiting, preserving, and diffusing which, they have been revealed. As the ritual of the Mosaic institutions would have been unmeaning and worthless apart from the spirit of prophecy that breathed through them, so the insti-

tutions of Christianity are unmeaning and worthless when they do not serve to embody the spiritual life derived from Christian doctrine. The jewel gives importance to the casket; "the life is more than raiment."

The great end of Christian institutions is to exhibit, conserve, and propagate Christian doctrine, as divinely appointed channels in which the water of life is to flow, or as divinely prepared soil in which "the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations," is to flourish. Evangelical doctrine, or the doctrine which develops the gospel plan of redemption in all the variety of its adaptations to man as the subject of the Divine government, is the one hemisphere of Christianity; the apostolic institutions, or the practical observances and duties binding upon man in all the relationships of the present state, as enjoined by the Apostles, constitute the other hemisphere of Christianity. Both together include, as in a perfect orb, the whole of Christianity,—“the new world that grace has made.”

We have said that our subject refers to institutions rather than doctrines. It is not, however, with all the institutions of Christianity that we have to do, but with that portion of them which relates to the constitution and government of societies of Christian men. It will be our business to shew what the apostolic institutions are in reference to this matter, how far they are obligatory, and to what extent their observance is subservient to the conservation and diffusion of Christian doctrine. In so doing we shall appeal to the written revelation as the only authority.

It is apparent from the nature of the case that our



subject depends for its satisfactory elucidation wholly on the testimony of the written Word. If the Christian religion relate to anything beyond the mere spirit and inward conviction of man—if it in any way touch man's social position—if it be intended to exert a diffusive influence in respect to the outward relations of human life—if, in an especial manner, it have anything to do with church government and organization—then this matter must be the subject of distinct revelation. To suppose otherwise is to suppose that the Divine Being has imposed an obligation, without indicating how he would have it discharged.

The following remarks from a modern writer are pertinent to the present topic, and worthy of serious consideration by all:—

“If the volume of the New Testament be really distinguished by those peculiarities of evidence which stamp it as the record of revealed truth, it irresistibly follows, from the very nature of such evidence, that it must possess that Divine character, to the utter exclusion of every other species of record or document which does not exhibit those peculiarities of evidence.

“According to all received or intelligible views of Divine revelation, this must necessarily be the case; without reference to any nicer distinctions sometimes raised, the very notion implies a broad line of demarcation. According to any conceivable idea of the word of God, it follows that its Divine supremacy must stand out alone, at an immeasurable and unapproachable distance from every thing else, however ancient or excellent, whether we take our position in the remotest antiquity, or in the opinions of the present day, or view it from one point of time or another, like a star without parallax.

"If the New Testament be a volume altogether *sui generis*, then all other writings and records, even of the earliest Christianity, must stand on wholly different ground. They can have nothing in common with it. Their proximity in age is no approximation, even the most distant, in nature or authority. In any conceivable sense of a revelation once for all vouchsafed, all subsequent differences of time utterly disappear. It is the precise nature of the written record that it puts all after ages upon a level. If there were a line drawn — a closing of the canon of inspiration — then no other remains even of the apostolic age can be of any comparable value. If there were a finality in the New Testament revelation, it follows that when we have ascended to the earliest and purest of the primitive writers, we are still no nearer to the Divine source of truth than among the theologians of the present day." \*

These sentiments are ours. We can no more recognise the authority of man in matters of religion, than in matters of science. In both we have to ascertain the ordinances of God. What the volume of nature is to the student of natural science, the volume of inspiration is to the student of revealed science, or religion. To suppose that human authority can determine what is taught in respect to either, is equally absurd. The language of Bacon, applied in the first instance to nature, is also applicable to revelation. Man, "the minister and interpreter of nature,"† is equally the minister and interpreter of revelation. As in respect to the former, associations

\* Edinburgh Review, No. 169, pp. 209, 10.

† "Homo naturæ minister et interpres,"

of men can only help the individual student to form an independent opinion of his own; so, in the latter case, the opinions and practices of the church, so called, can only help an individual Christian to form an independent opinion in respect to Christian doctrine and duty. The ultimate appeal in both cases must be to *facts*, not human opinion, and every man must be for himself the final judge. When Galileo was imprisoned because he asserted that the world moved, an insult was offered to science in his person; but how many thousands and tens of thousands have been made to suffer for pursuing their own inquiries in respect to religion! The time will come when those who have commiserated the natural philosopher as a martyr of science, will regard with a deeper pity those silent, but not less noble martyrs, in whose persons religious science has been insulted in every age of hierarchical pretension.

Our appeal, then, in reference to the authority of those principles which we designate the principles of independency, is to the Divine revelation. If these principles are not to be found in the word of God, our cause must be abandoned. If they have not a purer origin than human invention or expediency, they must be set aside as not having claim even to a first hearing.

If, however, they are Divinely revealed, they can demand nothing less than implicit subjection. The practice of the church, in modern or in early times, can neither add to, nor detract from, their authority. The history of the church, in times posterior to Divine revelation, can in no way affect their claims.

In accordance with these views, we propose, in the following pages, to delineate the church principles of the New Testament, and afterwards to

shew how far, in periods succeeding the apostolic age, the professed churches of Christ have followed or abandoned them. The method thus adopted is identical with that followed by the inspired historians of the Jewish church. That church is not brought before us in the Old Testament, as developing itself age after age into newer and more perfect forms, as if it were first instituted an infant church by Moses, to grow up into manhood afterwards; but it is set before us as a community which received Divine laws and institutions in the first era of its existence, at the hands of its great and inspired legislator, which were perfect and final for that dispensation, and to which, therefore, nothing might be added by man. The post-Mosaic history of the Jewish church, as chronicled for us on the sacred page, is written on this hypothesis: it is not an attempt to exhibit new developments of the Divine will through the growing perfection of the Jewish people; but is a simple record of the conduct of that people in reference to an unchanging law of obedience and fidelity. "The law was given by Moses;" and the history of the Jews, from the death of Moses to its close, is a history of the manner in which that law was observed by the nation at large. The historical books of the Old Testament were not composed for the purpose of adding anything to the development of the Divine will contained in the pentateuch; but for the purpose of shewing how in successive periods the Jewish people departed from, or returned to, the *primitive* worship and obedience.

It is on the same principle that the history of the post-apostolic church should be composed. As the sacred chroniclers have never supposed that anything

might be added except by direct Divine intervention to the law which came by Moses, so the historian of the Christian church should never admit the hypothesis that anything may be added to the "grace and truth" which came by Jesus Christ, and were finally exhibited in all their essential aspects by his inspired apostles. All that the historian can do is to show how far men calling themselves Christians, and communities assuming the name of Christian churches, have adhered to, or departed from, the primitive doctrines and institutions of the apostolic age.

We are aware that it has been asserted by some that the New Testament contains nothing specific or positive in reference to our subject, and that Christ and his apostles have left the church without any rules for its guidance in reference to government and discipline. Whether this assertion be true we shall see as we proceed. In the mean time, our position is unaffected by the assertion, whether true or false. The New Testament contains *all* that is authoritative, whether little or much, on the subject of religion; and the history of the church can only show how far men have yielded, or refused to yield, subjection to *it*. Be it distinctly understood, then, that in tracing the post-apostolic history of independency, we have no thought of thereby corroborating the argument in its favour deduced from the New Testament. The orb of light which shines upon our path is the Divine word alone, and is "without parallax;" while merely human opinions, like terrestrial objects, have a variable aspect, according to the position from which they are viewed.

We are thus explicit in stating the principles on which the present work is written, because of the

many misconceptions which exist in reference to the lessons of church history. Too commonly our ecclesiastical writers have overlooked the fact of the immense interval between the divine history and the human. While some have passed with breathless haste over the inspired records of the apostolic age, making it only a first and brief stage in the progress of the church; others, inverting the true order of things, have gathered together the lessons which may be learnt from the human history of the church, in order to falsify those which are taught from the divine. Nor have more Christian historians kept their eye sufficiently single to the pure light which emanates from the sacred word, as a sure beacon to every age. Even in that popular and most invaluable history, which has recently been given to the world, this fault has been committed.\* While in that work the references to THE WORD as the ultimate authority in religion are very numerous; they are, nevertheless, so scattered throughout the volume, as almost to lose their force in the general plan, instead of being gathered together at the outset, as the standard to which the church must be brought back in every reformation worthy of the name. When a traveller misses his way, he must retrace his steps to the path from which he deviated; but how can this be done, unless that path is known?

In the following work, then, an attempt will be made to place human history in its true position. Antiquity, however hoary, will not be permitted to lend any sanction to error; the want of antiquity will not be allowed to rob any principle of authority, if

\* D'Aubigné's "History of the Reformation."

found in the Divine word. The merely human teacher, be he pope or priest, council or synod, will be placed on a level with every other teacher not inspired. The so-called catholicity of the church, in sentiments that are true, will be no more esteemed a proof of their truth, than the same catholicity in sentiments that are false. Those things which are to be believed and practised in the name of Christianity, are irrespective of human opinions, single or accumulated, of one age or of another. The only authority to which we dare submit our conscience, and to whose bidding we are willing to yield our souls, is that which exhibits divine credentials. When the stupendous alternative of final bliss or woe depends upon the complexion of our faith and practice, who or what will step for one moment between us and the authority that speaks IN THE NAME OF GOD ?

A further statement respecting the precise bearing of the post-apostolic history of the church on the principles of Independency, will be made in its proper place, after the development of those principles in the ensuing chapters.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE FIRST PRINCIPLE OF INDEPENDENCY ; OR INDIVIDUAL INDEPENDENCY.

THE associated principles we now propose to consider, were gradually developed in the era of the Christian revelation. They might have been propounded at once in a systematic form ; but this was not “according to the purpose of Him who worketh after the counsel of his own will.”

It is not for man to prescribe the method in which God shall reveal himself ; neither is it just to assume that God has not revealed his will respecting the constitution and government of his church, when we have a record in the New Testament of the manner in which that church was organized and governed under the superintendence of inspired Apostles. We must derive our knowledge of the institutions of Christianity from the same source as that to which we repair for Christian doctrines. The latter are not propounded dogmatically, as in a creed or confession : why, then, should we expect the former to be revealed in that way ? In respect to both we must “search the scriptures.” He who does so, will discover that, as the scattered doctrines of scripture may be gathered



together in a perfect and consistent system of truth, so the miscellaneous references to the church principles and practices of the primitive Christians may be collected in one symmetrical platform of ecclesiastical polity, suited to the genius of that spiritual and universal religion whose interests it is intended to subserve.

On comparing the institutions of Moses with those of Christ and his Apostles, we find a great contrast between them, but not greater than might be expected from the difference between the two dispensations of the law and the gospel. If this difference be observed, we shall find as much that is really authoritative in the institutions of the one as of the other.

Let it be remembered, for example, that the ceremonial law was for the most part typical or prophetic, and then it will be seen how necessary it was that every portion should be specific. Who but God could institute a prophetic ritual? The shadows of good things to come could only be painted by the hand of Him who knew what those good things were; and therefore every minute particular was authoritatively enjoined. The structure and furniture and vessels of the sanctuary, the priests and their order, their garments and their duties, the sacrifices and their kinds, and the times and manner, of their offering;—all these and many other matters, of the most trifling character, were given after the Divine pattern, from which no deviation might be made. When we know that all these things had a typical or prophetic meaning, for the sake of which they were enjoined, we cannot fail to see the necessity for their positive enforcement. The same may be said of those portions of the law which had a retro-

spective aspect. None but God could say which of the events in the history of his people should be religiously commemorated, and which not. Therefore the Divine commandment was given as to what should be done, by way of remembrance as well as by way of anticipation.

But under the present dispensation there is no need for the minute specification of ritual observances. There is nothing more to anticipate in reference to this world. The Father "*hath* blessed us with all spiritual blessings" in heavenly things in Christ Jesus." The "good things" themselves have come, and what need any longer for the mere shadows of them!

It, however, by no means follows, that because a system of ceremonial observance is no longer needed, a system of principles may not be instituted. Neither are we hastily to conclude that because everything connected with religious observance is not minutely specified, therefore some prominent and important matters are not provided for. Yet further we are not warranted in saying that nothing is prescribed in the New Testament for the direction of Christian men in their social organizations, merely because the prescript is not formally delivered in the shape of a positive law.

We find from the New Testament record that the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are instituted in terms as positive as those which enjoin any of the ceremonial rites of Judaism; and although no temporal penalty is attached to the neglect of these ordinances (as was the case with respect to the neglect of Jewish ceremonial observances), yet they are generally, if not universally, deemed binding upon the Christian church, simply because they are instituted.

The same may be said in reference to some of the apostolic directions in the epistles delivered to the churches. Who can read those epistles without being convinced that there are *some* regulations, at least, which every church or congregation must follow, if the approbation of Christ is to be had? Is not great care taken, by Paul especially, to instruct the faithful in their duty as to the admission or non-admission of members to their fellowship? Are not certain characters described as unfit for membership? Is there not a positive command not to have fellowship with such? And if it be as we have stated,—if there be directions of this kind, shall it be affirmed without contradiction, (as it has been too often,) that there is nothing positive in respect to the government and discipline of Christ's people? Do our instructors in these matters want something more positive than an emphatic series of directions? Can they see no force in a rule, although delivered by inspired men, until it is connected with temporal penalties?

Again, in reference to official persons in the Church of Christ, whether ordinary or extraordinary, have we not repeated announcements respecting them and their kinds or classes, in the New Testament? Are they not spoken of as the special provision or *gift* of Christ? Is not their office amply described, either in the statement of qualifications essential to it, or in the record of conduct exhibiting the discharge of its functions? And if it be so, is not this enough? Can any thing more positive be needed by those who look for the mind of Christ in His own word? Are we here also to wait for threatened penalties before we allow these distinctly enunciated kinds and qualifications of office to be considered as binding upon Christ's people?

Lastly, are there not certain principles distinctly recognized, either by Christ or his Apostles, or both, in respect to the liberty which Christian men are to enjoy, whether as individuals or in their associated character? Will any man who has carefully perused the New Testament affirm that he can gather nothing, either in the shape of precept or implication, which will serve to show whether Christ and his Apostles sanctioned or forbade liberty of conscience, religious freedom, and the voluntary worship and service of God? Can it be affirmed that, so far as the mind of the Apostles can be ascertained from their recorded acts, and from their writings, it was, and, were they now living, would be, a matter of indifference to them whether Christ's people were religious vassals, and subject to human domination, or religious freemen, and subject to Christ and His word alone? Will it be said that no provision was made, no directions were given, adapted to preserve the people of Christ from worldly and secularising influences, and from human dictation, as it might be sought to be exercised by Christians over one another? If these questions can be answered only in such a way as shall confirm the position that much is either enjoined or implied tending to religious freedom, what more can be needed to show that the mind of Christ is positively revealed in respect to such a matter? Shall we again look out for penalties before we yield obedience to the King of Zion?

It is apparent, then, that there are positive institutions still. Christ has not left his people without laws. The Apostles have not left the Churches without directions in respect to the great principles on which they shall act, whether in their individual or associated character. Our guide is still with us. Our

standard both of duty and privilege is before us. It is our business now to show what we believe to be the teaching of the New Testament, in respect to those principles which constitute the great bulwark of Christian liberty in every age, and which we designate the principles of religious Independency.

The first principle of Independency regards the individual, and may be thus expressed :—**EVERY INDIVIDUAL IS INDEPENDENT OF HUMAN AUTHORITY IN ALL MATTERS PERTAINING TO RELIGIOUS FAITH AND PRACTICE.**

This principle is fundamental,—the root from which the other principles grow, and of which they are only a further development. If Christ and his Apostles are considered as the foundation of the Christian Church, \* this principle provides that every member of that Church shall be built upon it alone. It denies human authority, in order to enforce Divine.† It puts man out of the way, that the sinner may believe in Christ, follow next to Christ, obey Christ. It does not discard human assistance, but it will not permit that assistance to swell out into authority. It admits all benevolent agencies, whether for the edification of the Church, or for the evangelizing of the world; but it refuses to lend its sanction to such agencies when they are clothed with human authority instead of bringing to Divine authority; when they lead away from Christ, or beyond Christ, to any thing human.

This principle has no exceptions. It lies at the basis of all religious independency; no other development of independency must subvert it; nothing may violate it. It is the blade: the ear also may grow;

\* Eph. ii. 20.

† Eph. iv. 23—26.

but it must grow out of the blade, not to destroy, but as a natural development of it.

This principle is essential. There is no vital Christianity without it. It cuts up, root and branch, every principle of human authority in religion. When legitimate officers of the Church violate this principle, they depart from the genius of the gospel as much in kind, as illegitimate officers of the Church. Deacons, teachers, pastors, who violate this principle, depart as much from the genius of the gospel, as arch-deacons, priests, archbishops, patriarchs, exarchs, patrons, cardinals, primates, popes. Like its author, it pays no respect to persons.

This principle recognises the majesty of the human soul, as a real unit of intelligence and responsibility in the universe. It echoes the language of Him who said, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mankind had almost forgotten their own immortality, and consequently the immense difference between their spiritual and temporal interests, when He who came to seek and to save "that which was lost," revived a truth that was eternal, and made it the foundation of all his teaching. In every age there is a tendency to forget this truth; and the political, ecclesiastical, social, municipal, domestic organisations of this world contain elements more or less antagonistic to it. When men become gregarious, they are apt to overlook individual responsibility; and when power is exercised, during any length of time, in coercing men to obedience, the thought—the very thought of independence comes to be looked upon as strange and criminal.

The New Testament, however, has recorded the judgment of the Great Founder of Christianity on

this subject; as well as that of his inspired representatives—the Apostles.

To whichever of the gospels we turn, we shall find the Great Teacher addressing men as men, having souls which to each of them were an infinite concern. He commenced his instructions amongst the multitudes, not the rulers of earth, either civil or ecclesiastical. When he went forth, proclaiming the great truths of his kingdom, he passed by the fountains of human law and justice, appealing to men as the subjects of an infinitely perfect government, and not as the subjects of any earthly rule. He bade the river of water of life flow in all the lowest places first, often leaving the highest ground dry; nor was it until the waters had accumulated that the high places were reached. “To the poor the gospel is preached,” was an indication of the genius of his religion. Magistrates, rulers, princes, were not excluded from the Divine provision; but they must come to it on a level with all the world besides.

He was, indeed, the true Prophet for man—speaking not for one race or age, but for all time. His words fall upon the ear in harmony with the voice of universal nature, and touch the awakened spirit softly as the fanning breeze, and gently as the blowing clover or falling rain, or powerfully as the rolling thunder or the raging storm. When he reveals the new, it is with the simple majesty of one to whom it is ever old. Heaven is manifestly with him and around him; and to approach the thrice-hallowed presence of the Eternal, is but entering his Father’s house. Nay, man though he be, and one with us, that frame of his, so delicate, and so subject to all the changeable experience of suffering humanity, is the temple of the

Highest, and he, its tenant, is one with the Eternal. How full of comfort to the heavy-laden to know that this Divine Teacher is for all—that no monopoly was ever sanctioned by him in the things that enrich and ennoble man's spirit—that, as God sent his Son into the world to save the world, so he came to teach, to give, and to save freely, without money and without price, opening the door of heaven's mercies with his own hand, and bidding the whole world enter there!

If Christ had designed mankind at large to be instructed through the medium of constituted human authorities, he would have revealed himself first to the world's governors and rulers, enjoining it upon them to teach their subjects the doctrines and duties of His religion. By overlooking all political and earthly distinctions existing between man and man, and addressing himself to all as on a common level, and to every individual as the responsible agent for his own spiritual welfare, He taught the world and the Church the great principle of personal independency.

To enumerate all the particular instances in which Christ thus addresses himself to men individually, in such terms as are sufficient to convince the world that He regarded each man as free and independent in every thing pertaining to conscience and religious duty, would be to extract the greater portion of his recorded sayings.

We refer our readers, therefore, to the four gospels, and request them to notice the following things:—

1. The direct appeal which Christ makes to his hearers.
2. The absence of all announcements which in any way sanction human interference with the religious convictions of men.
3. The cautions frequently given respecting the influence of worldly fears in



spect to the opposition of rulers and men of authority to those who would act consistently with their religious convictions. 4. The distinction which Christ makes between the things of God and the things of Cæsar. 5. The emphatic manner in which He forbids ambition and domination amongst His followers. 6. The prominence which he gives to the soul of man, and its salvation, in comparison with every thing merely temporal. 7. The stern manner in which he rebukes every thing approaching to bigotry amongst his professed followers. 8. The tendency of his instructions to liberate men from all prejudices derived from human teaching. 9. The manifest design of Christ to draw all men to himself alone, as the only Prophet, Priest, and King over his disciples. 10. The prohibition of all methods of convincing and converting men excepting such as were suitable to the free exercise of reason and conscience.

In these and other particulars, Christ lends his sanction to the principle we are now endeavouring to establish. It is evident to all who read the simple record of his ministry, that he designed every man to judge for himself, and that no power was delegated by him to any of his servants, by which they might lord it over the individual conscience of any, even the meanest of his followers. Who can contemplate Christ as a Teacher, whether, on his mountain throne, or in his after intercourse with men, addressing the multitudes gathered around him, and pronouncing his benediction on mankind at large, according to their moral classification, without perceiving the universality of his religion? Does the glorious sun preach to man, without distinction of nation or person?—so does He. Do the flowers bloom for every eye that will behold

them ? Does the music of the winds breathe for every listening ear ? Do the circling seasons visit, in their turn, every portion of the peopled world ?—So do Christ's words suit themselves to the general ear and heart of humanity ; and every man must interpret their meaning for himself as words that contain the "spirit and the life" that are adapted to renovate and save the soul.

It might naturally be expected that the principle, so clearly implied in the Redeemer's teaching, would be enforced only more fully by his Apostles. When the Spirit was poured out upon them, to lead them into all truth, it was mainly for the purpose of bringing all things to their remembrance, whatsoever Christ had said unto them. "He shall take of mine and shew them unto you," was the Saviour's promise.

Accordingly, the Apostles are very explicit in asserting the same principle. While they urge the authority of Christ upon the submission of every human being, and their own apostolic authority as His inspired representatives and delegates, they most carefully exclude all others from the very pretension to such claims. Human authority in religion, whether protruding from the world into the church, or inwardly developing itself amongst the faithful, they unequivocally condemn. Refusing to submit their own conscience to domination, they also enjoin upon every man the duty of preserving inviolate from foreign intrusion the temple of God within.

In their preaching, whether before Jew or Gentile, they appeal to the Divine authority alone ; and as their Master before them claimed implicit obedience from every one who heard him, directly, and without waiting for any sanction from either civil or ecclesias-

tical rulers, so did they. They asked no human government for permission to preach the truth; and they never desisted from preaching the truth when human governments, whether powerful or petty, sought to arrest them in their peaceful embassy from the court of heaven. Their real position in respect to the rulers of this world was well expressed by their own language on a critical occasion — “We ought to obey God rather than man.”\* Their appeal was to every individual, and they commended themselves to “every man’s conscience.” “I have a message from God to thee,” might have been the very terms of their intercourse with every person coming within the sound of their voice. In this procedure they acknowledged the right, and enforced the duty, of every one to judge for himself in religious matters, and to act on his own exclusive responsibility. “Unto *you* is the word of this salvation sent,” was a declaration which imported that the Author of the Christian religion recognised every man as accountable for the complexion of his own religious character, and therefore as virtually the final arbiter of his own eternal destiny. No wonder that when such grave responsibilities pressed upon all men in their individual capacity, they should be often cautioned to take heed how they listened to their religious instructors.†

As in their first approaches to a sinful world, so in their intercourse with such as became their spiritual converts, the Apostles unequivocally asserted and acted upon the same principle. Not only did they permit men to be the judges of their apostolic credentials, but

\* Acts v. 29.

† Col. ii. 8, &c., 16, &c. Eph. 4. 13. Gal. v. 1. 1 John iv. 1, &c.

after their testimony was received as the result of independent conviction, they carefully abstained from lording it over the disciples and Christian believers, as if they had any personal claim to subjection. What they as Apostles enjoined, was to be complied with at the risk of the Divine displeasure ; but only because, and in so far as, they were Christ's representatives, and manifestly clothed with his power and authority. None other might dictate to the believing people. When, in the course of time, believers came together and were associated in Christian fellowship, the human infirmity and sin of domination, which Christ so earnestly repressed amongst the apostles themselves in the days of their pupilage, quickly developed itself, and Christians sought to prescribe for one another's faith and practice. But the Apostles nipped this evil spirit in its first buddings, and have left their sentence of condemnation on record — a sentence, at the same time of liberty for man in all the onward progress of his character and condition as the member of a religious community. If the declarations, "every one of us must give an account of himself to God,"—"every man shall bear his own burden," were not sufficient to indicate the independent responsibility attaching to every individual believer, the apostles are seen moving amongst the churches with more explicit statements to the same effect — statements suited to the peculiar circumstances of domination that presented themselves to their penetrating glance. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled with any yoke of bondage."\* "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."† "Let

\* Gal. v. 1.

† Rom. xiv. 5.

no man judge you in meats or drinks, &c." \* "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth." † "Believe not every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they be of God." ‡ "Not that we (even *we*, though apostles) would have dominion over your faith; but are helpers of your joy." And if a difference still existed between believers in respect to matters of importance, the principle to be observed was, "Let as many as are agreed follow the same rule, mind the same things."

Thus boldly and broadly was this first principle of Independency laid down, both by Christ and his Apostles. There is nothing to the contrary. It is without exception and without limitations. The rule is *absolute* in respect to all matters of religious faith and practice. He who knows not this, knows not the first and fundamental principle of religious duty and privilege. It is the only principle compatible with an intelligent recognition of the nature of religion itself. To act from any other principle in religious profession and observance, is not only to wear the badge of spiritual bondage; it is derogatory to the Divine character, and a voluntary surrender to man of that which belongs exclusively to God. §

\* Coloss. ii. 16, &c.

† Rom. xiv. 4.

‡ John iv. 1.

§ "We can conceive," says an eloquent writer, "that a man may abandon to an external authority the direction of his material interests, and his temporal destiny. But when it extends to the conscience, the thought, and the internal existence, to the abdication of self-government, to the delivering oneself to a foreign power, it is truly a moral suicide, a servitude a hundred-fold worse than that of the body, or than that of the soil." Guizot's "History of Civilization in Europe." Lecture VI.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE SECOND PRINCIPLE OF INDEPENDENCY; OR CONGREGATIONAL INDEPENDENCY.

THE first and fundamental principle of Independency, as explained in the last chapter, is manifestly of such a nature as to be of perpetual obligation. The religion of Jesus Christ in all its entirety, is to be embraced by individual believers on the sole ground of its Divine authority. Whatever, therefore, may be the outgrowth of individual faith, and whatever may be the relations subsisting between one Christian and another, or between one Christian society and another, this first principle is still to be regarded as inviolable. It comes first, not in priority merely, but in relation to man, as a spiritual unit whose eternal destiny is entirely dependant upon the manner in which his personal duty to God is discharged. Christianity might have been so communicated as to require submission from men in their individual capacity only; if, therefore, it undertakes to regulate the social relations of believers; if it prescribes a form of social organization, we may rest assured that it will proceed on principles not subversive, but conservative, of that which is fundamental. As the personal salvation of men is

the great end for which the gospel has been revealed, everything additional will be rendered subservient to this. The external envelope will be so constructed, as to preserve that which is of greater importance and enshrined within it. The development of the heavenly plant, however diversified, will tend to the nourishment, not the destruction, of that vital element which has its primitive seat in the root. If every individual believer has been constituted a king and priest in his own right, with whose independent acts of self-government and worship none may authoritatively interfere, excepting him who is King of kings, and High Priest of our profession, then this individual kingship and priesthood to God will never be invaded by anything additional in the after development of Christian obligations. To suppose otherwise, is to suppose that God gives and takes away at the same time; that liberty and bondage are compatible terms of service; that ONE only may be master, and yet that there may be MANY masters;—is, to convert principle into expediency, and divinely-harmonized institutions into discordant arrangements. God *is* able to bring light out of darkness, and good out of evil; but He cannot be the *author* of both.

It is a matter of Scripture record, that the early Christian converts living in the same locality came together, in the first instance, and became associated. This was natural.\* It was the result of sympathy. Having the same faith and hope, and being worshippers of the same true God, they necessarily felt an

\* “ The form of the Christian community and of the public Christian worship, the archetype of all the later Christian cultus, arose at first, without any preconceived plan, from the peculiar nature of the higher life that belonged to all true Christians . . .

interest in one another's presence and fellowship. This natural association was sanctioned by Christ and his inspired apostles, and constituted a means of edification and mutual Christian helpfulness.\* It was, however, at the same time brought under the special supervision of the apostles for purposes of organization, that it might not, on the one hand, become detrimental to the individual independency of those who were associated; and that it might not, on the other, be connected with arrangements leading to the invasion of its own essential liberties. If Christianity was to be exhibited in a social or congregational capacity, it was manifestly important that this development of its influence should be regulated by something more fixed than human expediency, lest the more important development of Christian influence in the individual should be checked through the infringement of individual liberty, either directly by majorities or official persons within the community, or indirectly by such a constitution of things as should admit of foreign interference.

It is also a matter of Scripture record, that in some of the primitive churches, individual members and parties attempted to bring the consciences of other members into subjection; and were *reproved* for so doing. The apostle Paul, in particular, gave emphatic instruction on this subject, as we have already seen, placing all Christians within the church, however

The power of the newly awakened feeling of Christian fellowship, the feeling of the common grace of redemption, outweighed all other personal and public feelings, and all other relations were subordinated to this one great relation."—Neander's "History of the First Planting," &c. book i. ch. ii.

\* 2 Cor. viii. 5. Owen's Gospel Church, p. 75.



associated in any given locality, on a footing of perfect independence, and subject only to Divine authority in matters pertaining to conscientious observance. However associated, and however diversified their gifts, all were reckoned the servants of Christ alone, and whenever one member sought to obtain dominion over another member's faith and practice, the question, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant," checked the unlawful invasion.

But it was also needful that the Christian society should be so constituted in its *external* relations as to preserve its own liberties. However scrupulous the members *within* might be respecting the independence of each unit of the body, all would be in vain unless the society itself were preserved from foreign interference. Considered in a practical point of view, it would matter little whether individual liberties were invaded and subverted from within, or from without the community. Both sources of danger, therefore, were most carefully to be guarded against. We find accordingly that provision was made, in the apostolic institution of Christian fellowship and organization, in both respects. This provision we designate the second principle of independency, not as opposed to, or essentially distinct from, the first; but as a development of it, and in order to shield it from injury in a wider sphere of operation, arising from the new circumstances into which individual believers are brought through association with one another.

This second principle of independency regards the congregation, or local association of believers, and may be thus expressed:—EVERY CONGREGATION, OR LOCAL CHURCH, COMPOSED OF CHRISTIANS MEETING IN ONE PLACE, IS INDEPENDENT, INTERNALLY AND

**EXTERNALLY, OF ALL HUMAN AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.**

This principle is *one*, inasmuch as it respects the congregation or society, as distinguished from the individual. From the terms, however, in which it is couched, it is evidently required to be considered in a two-fold aspect—as affecting the congregation internally and externally. We shall therefore treat it under each view separately, for the purpose of affording a lucid exposition of its nature and import.

Some remarks, however, are needful in reference to the principle considered as a whole.

It should be observed, then, that while the first principle of independency regards men individually, this regards men as Christians associated together upon some common basis of fellowship and organization. In order to obtain a just view of the precise character and extent of this fellowship and organization, we must bear in mind (what we have already advanced respecting individual or personal independency,) that in apostolic times Christians were regarded in a two-fold point of view—as independent Christian men, scattered over the whole world and in no sense united by any visible relations or ties; and, secondly, as members of the local associations, congregations, or churches, which, on account of proximity, they had joined. Under the first aspect, Christians were regarded by the apostles as open to all the influences of truth, when accompanied by Divine credentials, quite irrespective of the locality in which they might reside, or of the opinions of their fellow-Christians. Under the second aspect, Christians were regarded by the apostles as members of the Christian community congregation or church in the locality, formed for

purposes of fellowship and social worship. Regarded in the second capacity, their first capacity was neither annihilated nor impaired: it was only improved upon by the agency of blended sympathies and mutual service, derived from fellowship and association. If in their first capacity, no authority might be exercised over them, excepting such as was manifestly Divine; so, in their second capacity, no authority might be exercised over them, excepting such as was manifestly Divine. The relation subsisting between Christians in the local community or church was to be of such a character, that each Christian should still be for himself the final judge of truth. They were still to call no man "master" but Christ; they were not to judge one another in matters pertaining to conscience, but to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, edifying one another in love. In their first capacity, they belonged to the universal church—"the general assembly and church of the first-born written in heaven"—as those who had been "begotten again from the dead unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," and were "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." They were "God's husbandry," not man's; they were "God's building," not man's. The kingdom of heaven was "within" them; not "with observation," not "of this world;" but spiritual, invisible, and Divine. Hence they are either addressed or spoken of as "elect," "saints," "called to be saints," "faithful brethren," "holy brethren," &c. In their second capacity, they did not depart from the prerogatives of their "high calling;" but being joined to such as were distinguished by the same lofty and holy charac-

teristics, voluntarily and without any degree of compulsion, they were still to be considered as Christ's freemen, and the new relations on which they had entered, were intended to subserve their mutual edification in all that distinguished them as individual Christians. If there was a difference between these two capacities, it was not one of contrariety or opposition. In point of order and importance, the first was first, and the second subordinate to it. Nothing arising out of the second was to subvert or contravene that which was essential to the first. To present "*every* man perfect," was the design of the entire system of instituted means, and the local association was of importance, not in itself, but because it was to be rendered conducive to the perfecting of the several parts. Thus the whole body, fitly framed together, and compacted by that which every joint supplied, was to make edification of itself in every part, and to grow up into Christ, its living Head in all things.\*

In confirmation of these views, we appeal to the practice of the apostles, and of the churches acting under their inspired superintendence. That Christians were regarded as members of an universal family, connected by *spiritual* ties alone, is evident from the frequent manner in which reference is made to them in this general capacity. Nor is the fact less apparent from the circumstance that more than half of the apostolic letters are addressed to Christians without respect to their local associations.† That Chris-

\* Ephes. iv. 15, 16.

† e. g. Rom. i. 7.; Ephes. i. 1.; Coloss. i. 1.; James i. 1; 1 Pet. i. 1; 2 Pet. i. 1.; 1 John; Jude.

tians were also regarded as members of local churches, is no less evident, from the epistles addressed to particular churches, and from the minute details respecting the history of some of the early churches in the Acts of the Apostles. From these authentic records we learn that the first churches were composed of Christian men and women, who entered into a voluntary association with one another under the direction of the apostles; and that in no instance were the associations any other than local, or such as might hold their assemblies in one place. The general mode in which they were designated was—"the congregation or church of God, in" or "at" such a place; while other terms were employed to express the idea of their characters, such as "saints and faithful brethren," or "called to be saints," or "elect according to the will of God," &c. In no case do we find any mention of the church *of* a place, but always *at* or *in* a place. In no case do we find any mention of "the church" of a district, province, or nation; but always "the churches" of a district, province, or nation.\*

These scriptural *data* are in accordance with the general principle of congregational independency, now under consideration. The importance which attaches to them is derived from the uniform testimony they afford to the practice of the apostles. Nothing can more unequivocally express the method of apostolic procedure than the uniform tenor of apostolic practice. If they had been guided by no fixed plan, as some have asserted, in the planting and organizing of churches,

† Neander's History of the First Planting of the Christian Church. Biblical Cabinet, vol. i. p. 169.

we should discern this want of plan in their conduct. But is it so? Can a single exception be found to the rule we have specified? Every church was congregational only. There is no exception. What other inference can be drawn from this singular fact—a fact worth more than a thousand volumes on the subject, composed by the hands and elaborated from the heads of uninspired men,—than that the apostles acted according to a Divine rule, and that this rule is binding in every age. It is true that we may sometimes learn as much from the omissions as from the statements of Scripture. Let this very grave omission of all reference to *extra-congregational* churches in the New Testament be taken into candid consideration. Let it be considered in connection with the many direct references to the existence of purely congregational churches, formed and superintended by the apostles; let it be considered that both omission and statement point to an uniform law of procedure during the apostolic age; and then let it be asked how any can affirm that no rule has been prescribed for the regulation of Christian fellowship?

So far from this, the apostles followed one unvarying method in every period of their ministry. They were all of one mind in reference to this subject. There is not a hint of the slightest difference amongst them, either in opinion or practice. That there were points of contrast in their natural, moral, and religious character, we know. If, then, they were left to themselves to decide upon the method by which Christianity should develop itself amongst men in their social relations, is it not natural to conclude that they would have adopted different methods, according to their peculiar predilections? Or, if they determined to

act in concert, should we not have heard of their consultation respecting a point upon which so much would depend? And if they were not perfectly assured that they had "the mind of Christ," should we not have received some hint respecting the experimental character of the first churches and their organization, with directions to the entire body of Christians in after ages to improve upon the plan which in the judgment of inspired apostles seemed best suited to the genius of Christianity? But we are too grave in our treatment of those who think the apostles followed and instituted no rule in reference to this subject. The pen of a Pascal or of an Erasmus would be more fitting here than that of a mere expounder of scripture truth.

It should also be remembered that this apostolic principle was applied indiscriminately to all Christians, in every locality, and during the entire period of the apostolic ministry. If one method had been adopted amongst the Jews, and another amongst the Gentiles; if the people of one nation had been organized after one plan of church order, and the people of another and different nation after another; if Christians inhabiting cities and places of large resort had been brought under one class of regulations, and the Christians inhabiting the villages under another class of regulations; then we might have concluded that the apostles laid down no general and fixed rule, but left the practical question of church organization to be settled by views of expediency, as the fluctuating and ever shifting condition of human affairs might dictate. But it was not so. The apostles overlooked all distinctions of place, and people, and circumstance whatsoever. Their language was, "So we ordain in

all the churches." The platform on which they erected the structure of church order and observance was regenerated human nature, not the conventional distinctions of time. As Christians were "new creatures in Christ Jesus," where there was "neither Jew nor Gentile, Scythian, barbarian, bond, nor free, but Christ all and in all," so; wherever there were Christians, kindred elements were in existence from which to construct a uniform system of social organization. Hence, as a matter of fact, the churches *everywhere*, during the apostolic age, were local, congregational, and independent.



## CHAPTER IV.

### CONGREGATIONAL INDEPENDENCY CONSIDERED INTERNALLY.

HAVING considered the second principle of Independency generally in the last chapter, we now proceed to a more minute examination of its development in the apostolic age, under the twofold aspect of internal and external. By the internal independency of the local or congregational church, we mean its internal organization on such a plan as to secure all real power for purposes of self-government in the hands of its members; by the external Independency of the local or congregational church, we mean its absolute independence, as a society or congregation, of all authority emanating from without itself. We shall enquire into the former of these two aspects of the general principle in this chapter, reserving the latter for the next.

In order to secure the internal independence of a church, the apostles have made ample provision, both by their institutions and their recorded instructions. For example—1. They have exhibited the object or design for which the local church or congregation is to exist—namely, mutual edification and usefulness. 2. They have enacted laws respecting the

means by which that design is to be accomplished; more particularly in reference to the admission and exclusion of members—the relief of the poor—the visitation of the sick—the observance of Christian ordinances and worship—and the appointment, support, and functions of church officers. 3. In addition to this, they have placed the power of practically interpreting and enforcing these laws in the collective body constituting the church. To have stopped short of this, would have been opening the door for that domination within the church which might prove subversive of the individual and collective liberties of the body. It would little matter what laws they propounded for the government of the Christian community, if such an ultimate power as this were not given to those who composed it. We find, therefore, that while in reference to doctrine every Christian member was to be the final judge of that which might be preached,\* in reference to discipline and the appointment of officers, the church at large in its collective members, was to be the final judge. To enter into minute detail in reference to all these points, would occupy too much space. We shall, however briefly adduce the evidence in respect to each for the satisfaction of the reader.

In reference to the *first* point, little need be said. The spontaneous gatherings of the first Christians at Jerusalem—their recorded acts of fellowship, worship, and liberality—the similarity between their first religious meetings and those held afterwards amongst the converted proselytes at Antioch, and the converted Gen-

\* Col. ii. 4—10, 16, &c.

tiles at Corinth and elsewhere—the apostolic instructions given to the churches, in the epistles addressed to them on the subject of their church fellowship and organization (Rom. xv. 2; 1 Cor. i. 10; xi. 12, 27, xiv. 14, 26, 40; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; Gal. v. 14, 15, vi. 2; Eph. ii. 19—22; Col. iv. 16; 1 Thess. iv. 9), are sufficient to show that, in the mind of the apostles, the churches or congregations were formed for the ends we have specified.

In reference to the *second* point, we shall refer to those portions of the New Testament in which the apostolic laws are either given or implied.

The following passages respect the admission, exclusion, and restoration of members, most of them being addressed to the churches in their collective capacity:—Acts, ii. 38—47, iv. 4, v. 32, ix. 31, xi. 22—24, 26, xvi. 5; Rom. xiv. 1, xvi. 1, 17; 1 Cor. v. 9—11; 2 Cor. ii. 6, 10; vi. 14—18; Gal. vi. 1; Col. iv. 10; 2 Thess. iii. 6.

The following refer to the relief of the poor and sick:—Acts, xi. 29; 1 Cor. xvi. 1—3, 14; 2 Cor. viii. 1—4, ix. 1—15; Phil. iv. 14; 1 Tim. v. 3—16; Heb. xiii. 16.

The following touch upon the point of Christian fellowship, ordinances, and worship:—Heb. x. 24, 25; James ii. 1—4, v. 16; 1 Pet. iv. 8; &c.

The following relate to the appointment, support, and functions of officers:—Acts, vi. 1—6, xiv. 23, xx. 17, 28—32; 1 Cor. xii. 28—30; Eph. iv. 11—16; Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. v. 27; Tit. i. 5—9; Acts, xiii. 1—3, compared with Acts, xiv. 26, 27; Gal. vi. 6; 1 Tim. v. 17, 18; Heb. xiii. 7, 17; 1 Pet. v. 1—7.

We shall refer again to the last particular, and

therefore content ourselves at present with the list of passages in which the law respecting office is given.

In reference to the *third* point, or the power of the local church to govern itself as the seat of supreme power, we must observe that we do not intend to convey the idea that every member was made a ruler, or that certain officers were not appointed, whose functions consisted in government of a certain kind—a matter to which we shall refer more explicitly in another place;—but we mean that the supreme power was conferred upon the church at large in its collective character. In support of this view, both omissions and statements in the New Testament concur. In the first place, there is no recorded instance of a congregation or local church being deprived of the power to choose its own members and regulate its own affairs. In the second place, there is little reference to officers of churches, in comparison with the references to the churches themselves, both in the record of their transactions and in the epistles addressed to them. In the third place, there is no instance of officers receiving instructions to consider their authority superior to that of the churches amongst whom they ministered. Fourthly, the instructions given to officers imply that their office was to be by and not against the consent of the church, collectively considered. Fifthly, the power given to the church at Jerusalem to choose its own deacons—the fact that the church at Antioch was, by the Spirit, made the means of sending forth Paul and Barnabas on a special embassy—the circumstance that all apostolic instructions to the churches were given to them directly, and not through any intermediate

party\*—and the subordinate prominence given to officers in comparison with churches — show that the churches held the first place in the mind of the apostles, and possessed the supreme power. On these and other grounds it appears to have been according to the Divine plan to make the congregation or local church internally independent. Other views, confirming the above, will be adduced in the course of our observations respecting the much-disputed point of officers in the Christian church, which we now proceed to investigate.†

The question respecting officers, although important, is not so important in itself as in its bearings upon the other question of congregational liberty. Little, comparatively, is said in the New Testament respecting it, because it was considered subordinate to more important matters. What is said, however, is sufficient to indicate the mind of the apostles in reference to it. It might be predicted, without prejudice to the question as to what particular officers were appointed, that their functions would not be such as to subvert the liberties of the Church; and in the general question, the presumption will be in favour of those offices which best harmonize with the principles already laid down. If, for example, the very idea of a Pope is at variance with the principle of congregational independency, the presumption is so far against it. Not less so the idea of a diocesan bishop. Not less so the idea of an extra-congregational presbytery, council, or

\* Neander's Hist. of Christian Religion, &c., Rose, vol. i. p. 193.

† See Neander's Hist. of the First Planting, &c., Bib. Cabinet, vol. i. p. 170, for an able paragraph in confirmation of these views.

conference, invested with power to manage the Church's affairs with authority over its members. Not less so the idea of a single minister or a plurality of ministers within the Church,\* having power over it. As in reference to church organization generally it has been determined, from what we have already seen, that it shall not violate the principle of personal independency; so, in reference to officers, it may be presumed beforehand, that their functions will not be such as to infringe upon antecedent rights and privileges.

This point is so simple and self-evident, that it can hardly need illustration. Practically, however, it has been much overlooked in questions of this nature. The discussion has too often proceeded upon the meaning of mere words and phrases, instead of being shaped according to those general principles which ought ever to be kept in mind in disputed points of this nature. Just as in the question concerning the value of good works, everything depends upon the previous question, which respects the grounds of a sinner's justification before God; so in this, everything pertaining to office in the church depends upon the view previously entertained respecting personal and congregational Independency. We cannot, in the former case, suppose that justification by faith *alone* is the Divine method of justification, and that good works also may justify before God. Neither can we, in the latter case, suppose that every Christian and every Christian community is to be independent of all human authority, and yet that an order of officers may

\* Owen's Gospel Church, p. 40.

exist either within or without the congregational Church, with authority to contravene such individual and communal rights. Liberty and bondage cannot be dispensed at the same time to the same parties. God is not the God of confusion, but of order. We find accordingly, that neither by Christ nor his Apostles were any parties invested with authority to exercise domination over the churches of Christ. On more than one occasion, the Redeemer checked the rising spirit of pre-eminence amongst his apostles; setting before them the example of Gentile rulers, who were fond of their authority, as a pattern which they were most carefully to avoid. "It shall not," said he, "be so amongst you." And as Christ laid the foundation, so did the apostles afterwards build upon it. Although, as apostles, they spake with the authority which they derived from Christ, yet they never advanced any personal claims to pre-eminence. One of their number emphatically disclaims all pretensions to such authority, saying, "Not that we would have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy."

Undoubtedly there are passages in the Epistles to the churches, and in the Acts, which imply that there were officers in the churches who had a certain kind of government and rule over the local church. The question, therefore, is—What *kind* of rule or government was conferred on these officers? Was it over the church in its collective capacity; and if so, to what extent? Was it over the individual members composing the church; and to what extent? We know that a pure republic may have officers invested with governing powers, as in Athens of olden time, or

as in the United States of America in our day.\* It is quite possible for certain individuals to be entrusted with executive power for specific ends, not subversive of the general government in the collective body of the people; and from the New Testament records it appears that the official government in the early churches was of this character only. It was expressly forbidden to become a lordship over faith in the individual members composing a church: it was also quite compatible with the existence of a higher than official power lodged in the assembly of the faithful. That this was the constitution of the particular offices held in the early churches, there can be no doubt.† While the members, separately considered, were to be subject to their leaders, rulers, &c., the rulers were responsible to the members collectively, and were amenable to them for their conduct. Their office was not so much personal as moral; and submission to them was not as if to them, but to the truth which they dispensed, and the order which their functions subserved. It was not a political government, authoritative and connected with the awe of physical power; but a spiritual and moral government, the success of which was wholly dependant on the character, knowledge, and Christian prudence of those who exercised it.‡

\* "They (i. e. the officers of the Church) were not destined to be unlimited monarchs, but rulers and guides in an ecclesiastic republic, and to conduct every thing in conjunction with the church assembled together, as the servants and not the masters of which they were to act."—Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c., Rose, vol. i. p. 193.

† Mosheim, Neander, &c. ‡ Owen's Gospel Church, p. 29, 30.



With respect to the kinds of officers appointed to have a permanent place within the congregational church, we find that they were two, and two only. Apostles, evangelists, and prophets, were not congregational officers at all. Apostles were general or universal officers, or, as Mosheim terms them, "extraordinary teachers," to whom all were bound to render subjection, on account of their inspired character. \* Evangelists were temporary officers, intended to supplement the labours of the Apostles,† acting under apostolic direction, and moving from church to church, or from one district to another, according as they might be sent by the apostles. Prophets, ‡ if they can be termed officers at all, were raised up only for a season, to instruct and warn and animate the churches in their early history.§ These three classes of officers, then, had no permanent place in the local churches.

The permanent officers were bishops or presbyters, and deacons. It appears, on a careful investigation of the matter, that the former were designed to take the general oversight of the congregational church, in all that conduced to the perfecting and advancement of their spiritual interests; while the latter were designed to subserve the same spiritual interests, by attending

\* Chrysostom, in the third century, calls them "governors or presidents of the whole world"—*τῆς οἰκουμένης προεστίαν . . . τὴν οἰκουμένην ἅπασαν κυβέροντων*. — Homilies on 1 and 2 Cor. Clarkson's Select Works, p. 142.

† † Gieseler's Compendium of Eccl. Hist. Foreign Theol. Lib. vol. i. p. 93.

‡ Rom. xiii. 6. 1 Cor. xii. 28.; xiv. 3, 29. Eph. iv. 11. Acts, xxi. 9, 10.

§ Neander's Hist. of the First Planting of the Christian Church, book i. ch. ii. Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. i. part ii. ch. ii. sec. ix.

to matters of a secular character in connection with the operations of the body. The former presided over the assembly as its regulators, moderators, guides, leaders; but always in accordance with Christian laws and not by virtue of any personal authority. They taught from the Holy Scriptures what they thought to be the mind and will of God, in respect to doctrine and duty; and for this purpose their abilities and gifts were supposed to qualify them.\* They were also (not at first, but afterwards, by express provision) freed from secular duties, in order that they might give themselves wholly to the study and explanation of the Word of God. These, and other necessarily springing out of these, were the special duties pertaining to their office. The deacon's office, inasmuch as it was for the spiritual welfare of the church, was to be fulfilled by such as were qualified to occupy it with a spiritual apprehension of its design; but the duties themselves were secular, such as distributing alms to the poor, visiting the sick and needy, attending to all things which pertained to the temporal comfort and provision of the church in its congregational capacity.

While many names were employed to designate the spiritual office and its functions, such as "pastors and teachers," "shepherds," "rulers," &c., two names appear to have been most commonly used, viz. "presbyters" and "bishops," the English terms corresponding to which are *elders* and *overseers*. How it came to pass that both names were applied indiscriminately to one and the same persons we propose to show.

The reader will bear in mind that the Gospel was

\* 1 Tim. iii. Titus, i.

first preached, and Christian churches were first formed, amongst the Jews. It was not until after many years that the Gentiles were invited to embrace the offers of the Gospel. When, therefore, the spiritual officers were first appointed amongst the converts of the Jewish people, it was quite natural to designate them by a term already in use amongst the Jews, giving that term a peculiar signification accordant with the design of the Christian office, to which it was applied. The term *presbyter* was this term. The leaders or rulers of the synagogue were termed presbyters; perhaps on account of that superior knowledge, character, and influence, which generally attach to age. This name was appropriated in the Christian church on account of its suitability, as descriptive of the office instituted in it. This suitability would be even more striking in the earliest days of the Christian church than afterwards; inasmuch as in the new state of things the elder men, generally speaking, would be the best fitted to sustain the spiritual office. Thus the origin of the term presbyter in the Christian church is easily accounted for.

To go beyond this, as some have done, and affirm that the Christian church was formed after the *model* of the Jewish synagogue, is more than is warranted by the facts of the case, and seems derogatory to the free and independent spirit by which the church was originally constituted. There were certain elements in the organization of the Jewish synagogue which were in accordance with the social development in general; and, therefore, there may have been a similarity between the constitution of the Jewish synagogue and the constitution of the Christian church; but it is not necessary to suppose

that the latter was derived from the former.\* It is much more natural to suppose that both, in so far as they were similar, were derived from the fitness of the peculiar organization to the end to be accomplished through it. Moreover, if there was similarity between the Jewish synagogue and the Christian Church in some things, there was great dissimilarity in others;† leading to the inference that the one was not derived from the other, or formed after the model of the other, but that both had an independent basis, which happened to be in some things similar, in consequence of identical social ends.

We are led then to the conclusion that the name of presbyter or elder was employed in the first period of the Christian Church, because it was the most suitable term that could be used to designate a religious office amongst a people who were by nature Jews.‡ For many years—that is, so long as Christianity was confined to the Jews—the term presbyter alone was employed. No other was needed. It accomplished its purpose effectually. Every body understood what parties were referred to, when they were spoken of as “the presbyters or elders” of the Christian congregation.

But when Christianity was propagated, and Christian churches were planted amongst the Gentiles, the

\* “It may be disputed whether the apostles designed from the first that believers should form a society exactly on the model of the synagogue.”—Neander’s *Hist. of the First Planting, &c.*, vol. i. p. 34.

† Neander’s *Hist. of the First Planting, &c.*, book i. chap. ii. Coleman’s *Antiquities, &c.* chap. i. sec. 3.

‡ Neander’s *Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c.* Rose, vol. i. p. 186.

word *presbyter* was not sufficiently significant. Unaccustomed to the peculiarities of the Jewish worship and institutions, except where Jewish colonies existed in their midst, and even then very imperfectly acquainted with the private and religious affairs of the Jews, unless some of their number had become proselytes, the Gentiles would not derive from the term *presbyter* the idea which it was needful for them to have in respect to the parties sustaining the spiritual office in the Christian Church. As words are of use only when understood, this word would be of little use when standing alone, unexplained. It was in accordance with the genius of a religion so free and elastic as the Christian, to adopt other terms beside the old ones, in order to express its social provisions, wherever they were needed.

It so happened that a term was in use amongst the Greeks, which not only expressed the idea of office, but which more nearly suited the peculiar character of the spiritual office in the Christian Church than the term *presbyter*. The term *presbyter*, as we have already seen, was a name derived from age and a supposed corresponding experience and fitness, and was adopted only because it was familiar to the Jew in connexion with office over an assembly of the people. It did not to any one who was not a Jew express any thing more than age, and rank arising from age. Now the term of which we speak as in use amongst the Greeks, was descriptive both of the office and of its peculiar functions, that is, it might be used either as a mere name of the office to which it referred, or as a verb or participle in describing the peculiar functions themselves.

This word was the word *bishop*, or overseer. It

was not only in use in Attica to describe, "those who were commissioned to organize the states dependant upon Athens," but appears also "to have been a frequent one, for denoting a guiding oversight in the public administration." \* Homer, Aristophanes, and Demosthenes, use the word in the general sense, as a name of office. Cicero, in one of his epistles to Atticus, speaks of Pompey as desiring him to sustain the office of bishop, and refers to it as common throughout a large province of the Roman empire. The Greek commentator on Aristophanes explains the word as applied to those who were sent from Athens into the cities subject to it, to oversee or inspect their public affairs; adding that they were called by the Athenians, bishops and guardians, but by the Lacedemonians, harmosts or adjusters of public matters. In the fragment of an old work by Arcadius Charisius, the same name is applied to those public officers who presided over the bread and produce, used by the people for their daily food.

With such a term in common use amongst the Gentiles, more particularly in the Roman empire, it was natural for the apostles to adopt it, either by way of substitution or explanation, for the old term presbyter, as being more suitable to designate the office of the spiritual leader and ruler in the Christian Church. Accordingly we find that as Christianity spread in the Roman empire, and amongst the Greek colonies of Asia Minor, the name bishop became substituted for, or connected with, the name presbyter. We have no intimation in the Acts of the Apostles, that any other name than pres-

\* See Neander's Hist. of the First Planting of the Christian Church, vol. i. p. 167, 8; and the article *Επισκοπος* in all the Lexicons.

byter was used, so long as the gospel was confined to the Jewish people; but from the same inspired record we learn that when churches were formed amongst the Gentiles—such as had been heathen idolaters, and were ignorant of Jewish religious customs—the word bishop was used as well, and probably, in some places, more frequently than the term which it was employed to explain.

The first time in which we find the word bishop thus used, according to the inspired record of the Acts, was when Paul at Miletus sent for the presbyters of the Church at Ephesus, the stronghold of Grecian idolatry. He charged the *presbyters* of that Church to take heed unto the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost had made them *bishops*.<sup>\*</sup> From this time, if not before, the two names were used interchangeably as descriptive of the same thing. Sometimes the one is used, and sometimes the other, and sometimes both together.

This explanation of the origin of the two names in the Christian Church is so simple and satisfactory, that it is wonderful how any, in after times, could have had any other opinion than that they apply to the same office. There are only two reasons

<sup>\*</sup> Acts xx. ver. 28, where the word “overseers” in our version ought to have been rendered “bishops.” “That the name also of episcopus was altogether synonymous with that of presbyter, is clearly collected from the passages of Scripture, where both appellations are interchanged (Acts xx. compare ver. 17. with ver. 28; Epistle to Titus. ch. i. verses 5 and 7), as well as from those where the mention of the office of deacon follows immediately after that of “episcopi,” so that a third class of officers could not lie between the two. Philipp. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 1—8. *This interchange of the two appellations is a proof of their entire coincidence.*” Neander’s His ory of the Christian Religion, &c. Section ii. 1; Rose, vol. i. p. 188.

for the conduct of those who have endeavoured to substantiate the position that the bishop and presbyter were two distinct orders — first, a blind partizanship arising from educational and ecclesiastical prepossessions; and secondly, ignorance of the fact we have referred to in explanation of the origin of the two names. Church writers have generally been men practically connected with ecclesiastical systems which have embraced the three orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, and hence have been prejudiced in favor of an opinion countenancing their own practice. They have been dogmatical, however, on the subject, in proportion as they have felt the weakness of the Scriptural evidence in favour of their views. With all their learning they have never been able to explain how it happens that Paul, in the passage we have referred to, calls the presbyters of the Church at Ephesus, bishops; \* how it is that he should again, in his Epistle to Titus, call the presbyters bishops, using the one term as identical in its official meaning with the other; † how it is that Peter should exhort the presbyters to exercise their office of bishop willingly, &c.; ‡ and how it is that in the Epistle to Timothy, § and in the Epistle to the Philippians, || bishops and deacons alone should be referred to, if there were a class coming between the bishops and deacons, to whom the name of presbyter was applied. The advocates of three orders have never been able to explain these

\* Acts xx. 28.

† Titus i. 5 compared with 7.

‡ 1 Pet. v. 1, 2; where the words "taking the oversight" should be rendered "exercising the office of bishop."

§ 1 Tim. iii.

|| Phil. i. 1.



in all the inspired records of the primitive age. To designate the Church of Christ universally, or the churches of Christ in any locality, by words and terms connected with office, is to evince a departure from the Scriptural view of the relation existing between the church and its officers. To speak of this portion of Christ's people as *the Episcopal Church*, and that portion as *the Presbyterian Church*,\* because of certain views respecting office, betrays the prevalence of a wrong idea respecting the Church itself. Why should the servant give his name to the family? Officers were made for the churches, not the churches for officers. Why should that which expresses at most only a limited portion of the church's being, be put prominently forward as if it contained the whole? Are bishops or presbyteries the church? If, in order to remove misconception, it is necessary to add distinguishing terms to the simple ones of *Church* and *Churches of Christ*, let those terms be suitable to the prominent Scriptural idea of the paramount claims and authority of the churches themselves, beyond those of the official persons whose functions are intended to be subservient to their prosperity. Let the *sovereignty* of Christ's people, and the *independency* of Christ's churches as communities over which no human authority may have dominion, be selected as the prominent idea to be conveyed through the medium of ecclesiastical terminology.

\* Of course the term *Popish church* (which is never used) would be yet more significant of departure from the Scriptural idea of the church of Christ. The phrase *the Roman Catholic church* avoids the objection in the text, but is a contradiction in terms. How a church can be Roman (*i. e.* local) and yet Catholic (*i. e.* universal), it is difficult to conceive.

## CHAPTER V.

### CONGREGATIONAL INDEPENDENCY CONSIDERED EXTERNALLY.

HAVING seen, in the last chapter, that the congregational churches of the New Testament were internally independent, admitting no element subversive of the collective power or individual liberties of the members, we now proceed to show that the same churches were *externally* independent. By this we mean that every church was an independent society, containing within itself all the authority and power requisite to the management of its own affairs, and admitting of no authority *foreign* to itself, under any form whatsoever.

It should be observed that we speak of authority only. We do not deny that there was intercourse, and sympathy, and reciprocal love between the churches; but this was never in any case connected with authority or power exercised by one church over another, or by any number of churches over any individual church, or by any representatives or officers of any church or churches over any of the independent societies. We do not find in the New Testament any recorded case of congregational subjection to any party without the congregation; of course, always excepting the apostles and such parties as were appointed by them, and acting under their immediate authority. We do not find any recorded

case of *synodical* power in any shape whatever. Whatever heresies, disorders, evils, may have existed at any time (and that such things did exist in some of the churches is distinctly stated)—whatever need there was for the reformation of abuses and corruptions (and that there was such need there can be no question)—we meet with no recorded instance of foreign interference exercised over any church whatsoever. More than this—there is no intimation, instruction, direction, in any part of the apostolic writings, implying that any other party than the members of the congregational church itself were to rectify any disorders within it. In the Corinthian Church, for example, there was much that was wrong; but that church was called upon to exercise its own power in applying the necessary correction. In the seven churches of Asia Minor, there were many proofs of spiritual defection; but no party was authorised to interfere with them: each church was required to exercise within itself such salutary discipline as might alter the state of things. And it is true, in general, that although the apostles had very positive knowledge, and gave very emphatic warning, of errors, heresies, schisms, and disorders, which should arise in the churches, either before or after their decease; yet they never gave any directions which could possibly lead the churches to infer that other means than those divinely instituted in each church would be needful to set things in order. The idea of church *supervision* by the delegates, or representatives, or officers of the churches in any district, province, or nation, never meets us in any of the apostolic writings. Synods, councils, conferences, extra-congregational presbyteries, having *authority* over any number of churches, have

neither place nor sanction in the practice of apostolic times. The only intercourse between the churches of those days was that of friendship, sympathy, Christian love, and kindness. There was much union, but it was of the proper kind. When one church could assist another by pecuniary aid, it was promptly rendered; when the members of one church left their own neighbourhood, and came into that of another, they were cordially welcomed; when any church was called to special privation or suffering, the other churches deeply condoled and sympathized, as being members of the same body of Christ. But never did any church invade the rights and liberties of another; neither was it supposed that a number of churches had any power to exercise domination over the members of any one church.

It was obviously of essential importance to preserve this external independence for each congregational church. Without it the internal independence of the church would be but a poor guarantee for either congregational or individual liberty. In a parallel case, the civil liberties of a people may be provided for by their own constitution and laws; but of what avail would such a provision be, unless the people, in a national capacity, are independent of foreign control? The laws of England, for example, aim at securing the liberty of the subject; and that they do so as effectually as the laws of any country, is the boast and glory of our land. But what meaning would there be in such a boast if England herself were not free? Let France, Austria, Russia, Prussia, or any other foreign state, have an admitted right to interfere with our internal affairs, of what avail were our constitution and laws? While the laws of our land recognize for their chief end

the liberty of the subject; this absolute independence of the nation is essential to their practical efficiency.

The principle is the same in reference to a Christian society or congregation. External independency is essential to internal independency; while internal independency is essential to individual independency. To give a congregation or church the *sole* power of managing its own affairs, is the only guarantee that the members composing it shall enjoy their liberties. It is not disputed that a foreign authority might, under certain peculiar circumstances, be exercised co-ordinately with that of the local church; but, on the other hand, it cannot also be disputed that, if it be an authority, it might, under other circumstances, come into collision with that of the local church—might eventually sway and undermine it: just as a foreign state having an admitted right to interfere with British affairs, might at one season refuse to exercise its authority, for prudential reasons, and at another season might exercise it co-ordinately and contemporaneously with that of our British rulers; but, if the right of interference be admitted, might, under other circumstances, exercise it in direct hostility to our national interests, and prove our ruin. We may not be without apprehension respecting the subversion of our liberties, whilst our own rulers exclusively are over us; even under such circumstances, they need to be watched most vigilantly and jealously by the public eye; but how abject our condition if we had continual reason to apprehend the contingency of foreign interference as well! The mode of reasoning is the same in reference to the liberties of a Christian congregation: these liberties may not be always free from peril when fenced round by the provisions of an

internal independency ; but how much more so than if exposed to invasion from constituted authorities without the congregation itself'.

It seems incumbent on us to notice, in this place, what has been deemed an exception to the absolute rule we have laid down—an exception which has often been appealed to in post-apostolic times, in justification of synods, and conferences, and councils, and dogmatical interference with the independent rights and liberties of Christian congregations. We refer to the so-called “first council” at Jerusalem, of which we have a minute account in the 15th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

Before stating the real facts of the case, let it be observed that it is the only one appearing even to sanction the violation of the principle of congregational Independency, although many and subsequent opportunities presented themselves for settling controversies and points of order by the kind of authority alledged to have been recognized by the institution of such a council as the one composed of “apostles, presbyters, and brethren” at Jerusalem. This meeting was held in a comparatively early period of the apostolic era, and certainly before the idolatrous Gentiles had been called to embrace the gospel. It is not alledged that any such council was ever held before ; and the circumstance that no other was ever held afterwards, during any period of the apostolic era, notwithstanding the corrupt practices of the church at Corinth, and the prevalence of error and heresy in many of the Gentile churches, is somewhat singular, if indeed the surmise of its being a *council* at all, in the ordinary sense of the term, be not a great and glaring misapprehension of the entire case. So far from adopting.

the principle which some have discovered, or fain would discover, in this Jerusalem assembly, as a principle of synodical authority amongst the churches of Christ, the apostles in no instance set it before the churches as an example of this nature—in no instance give any directions which have the remotest tendency to establish it as a precedent.

On a careful examination of the case, it appears that the much-vaunted council was nothing more than a meeting of the Independent Church at Jerusalem, held for the purpose of satisfying the inquiries of the Independent Church at Antioch, respecting a matter of fact in which both churches were concerned.\*

The church at Antioch was composed of those who, before they embraced Christianity, had been proselytes of the gate; and some parties, proceeding from the church at Jerusalem, had come amongst them urging the duty of complying with the whole law of Mosaic ceremonial, in order to their being recognized as Christians. The question which the church at Antioch transmitted to the church at Jerusalem, or the apostles and elders who represented it, referred to a matter of fact, namely, whether the church at Jerusalem took that view of their duty, and sent forth the Judaizing teachers in their name. The circumstance

\* Mosheim's Eccl. Hist., cent. i. p. ii, ch. ii, sect. 14. Note—"The meeting of the church of Jerusalem, mentioned in the 15th chapter of the Acts, is commonly considered as the *first Christian council*. But this notion arises from a manifest abuse of the word *council*. That meeting was only of one church, and if such a meeting be called a *council*, it will follow that there were innumerable councils in the primitive times. But every one knows that a *council* is an assembly of deputies or commissioners, sent from several churches associated by certain bonds in a general body: and therefore the supposition above-mentioned falls to the ground."

that Paul and Barnabas could not set the matter at rest, and were sent to Jerusalem to make inquiries, is sufficient to show that the question was one not of *authority*, but of *fact*. Had the false teachers not come from Jerusalem, and in the assumed name of the church there, no appeal would have been made to that church. That Paul and Barnabas did not repair to Jerusalem as representatives of the church at Antioch, with full power to express their opinion, is evident from the fact that the church at Antioch was divided on the question of duty, and from the further fact that when they came to Jerusalem and joined the assembly, they did not give their judgment on the general question, but merely declared "what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them." That the meeting was not synodical, or œcumenical, (i. e., composed of delegates or representatives of a number of churches, or of the aggregate churches of Christ) is evident from the fact that no other church than that at Antioch sent messengers to Jerusalem, although the question concerned many other churches in "Syria and Cilicia," composed, like the church at Antioch, of proselytes of the gate. At the same time, the fact that the meeting at Jerusalem was composed of apostles *and* others—that the matter was *debated* in the presence of the apostles—that the apostles appealed to *Scripture* and known facts in reference to the will of God, and not to their own inspired authority—that the final declaration, opinion, or judgment, went forth in the name of "the apostles, elders, and brethren"—and that Paul and Barnabas had no voice in the decision, but were only admitted to the assembly as inquirers, and for the purpose of bearing witness to what God had done among the Gentiles;—all these are abundant proofs that the question had been referred.



to the church of Jerusalem, to be determined by them in their congregational capacity, and by them alone.

The apostles, who, from the commencement, had been specially connected with the church at Jerusalem, acted on this occasion as on many others (for they were Christian men as well as apostles) in their capacity as members of the church. When they spake as inspired men, communicating the will of God by revelation, they never joined to themselves other parties, as if their authority could be shared by others. As in former days *one* prophet was sufficient to declare with authority the will of God to Israel, so now one apostle, presenting the credentials of an apostolic mandate, had authority sufficient to command the subjection of the Christian church. The question agitated in the church at Antioch, had been settled by authority long ago. The difficulty of the present case arose from the Judaizing teachers, who had made use of the venerable name of the church at Jerusalem in enforcing their impertinent dogmas on the Antioch Christians, and from the existence of a number of partizans in the Jerusalem church, who, when the question was mooted, sided with them in opinion, saying "that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses,"—thereby causing the general question to be debated, as well as the particular one respecting the unauthorised conduct of the Judaizing teachers.

If further information be needed on this subject, it will be found in the appendix.\* The points upon which we have touched are sufficient to show that the so-called council was nothing more than a congregational church meeting of the Christians at Jerusalem,

\* Appendix A. for the opinions of Neander, Gieseler, Barrington, &c. on this subject.

the special object of which was to resolve the doubts of their fellow-Christians at Antioch, occasioned by some false brethren of their own number, who had used their name without authority. As the Jerusalem church was the first and mother church, from whose members the word of the gospel first "sounded forth to other regions," it was likely that any opinions or practices emanating from it would have great weight in determining the opinions of other churches. Just as in every age, a church which becomes the instrument of evangelizing its neighbourhood, and thereby of forming other churches, would be looked up to with special veneration; but in proportion as the truth prevailed, with nothing more. Hence the anxiety of the Christians of Antioch to know authoritatively what the opinion of the church at Jerusalem was in reference to this matter. The very terms, however, in which that opinion was given, shew that the word of God was the ground on which it was formed. "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost (*i. e.*, as ascertained by the Scriptures to which Peter and James referred in their speeches), and (as a natural consequence) to us, (*i. e.*, the apostles, elders, and brethren), to lay upon you no other burden than these necessary things (*i. e.*, necessary inasmuch as the law of Moses for proselytes of the gate, mentioned in the seventeenth chapter of Leviticus, was still binding upon them, until the final and visible abrogation of the Jewish polity and religion, which took place at the destruction of Jerusalem) that ye abstain from," &c. It is evident, from the tenor of this letter—so simple, so brief, so Scriptural, so free from all assumption,—that the opinion, grave and conclusive it might be, but still the *opinion* only of the apostles, elders, and brethren of Jerusalem, was given.

Our position, then, remains untouched. The churches of the apostolic era were to all purposes independent. Apostles giving proof of their apostolic authority, and evangelists, acting under their direct injunctions, were the only parties who could interfere with them in matters of faith and practice. Teachers and preachers coming into the neighbourhood of any of the churches, were to be tried and tested, and if the truth was not found in them, they were not to be received. Of any other parties seeking domination over the faith and practice of the early churches, there is no mention. Of any rule or direction, emanating from apostolic authority in reference to synodical and representative power, which should regulate the affairs of the churches, or any number of them, there is no hint even. Many as were the divisions, and schisms, and heresies, and corruptions of those days, no such expedients as those of later times were ever devised or attempted by which to subjugate the liberties of congregational churches, and through that of the individuals composing them, under plea of reducing all things to uniformity and order. If it be asked, how and why was this? we can discover only one answer,—and, would that it were heard and responded to once more throughout all the churches of Christendom, unloosing the fetters by which so many are bound, and reducing things in Christ's kingdom to their original standard and pattern!—that the genius of Christianity forbids every thing tending to bring the souls of men into bondage, and tolerates the incidental evils arising from the corruptions of human nature, rather than sanction any system, which, in the name of order and uniformity, superinduces mere mechanical regularity and spiritual death. Could the

ghosts of all the ecclesiastical synods, councils, conferences, extra-congregational presbyteries, that ever had being, be brought into the presence of the simple church meeting of the mother church of Jerusalem, by *it* to trace their origin and parentage, how would they skulk off one by one into limbo as they discerned the hideous contrast between the pretensions on which they were called into existence and by which they were afterwards worked, and the simple principle of *free Christian association* of which the Jerusalem meeting was only a development !

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE THIRD PRINCIPLE OF INDEPENDENCY ; OR, AGGREGATE INDEPENDENCY.

THE second principle of independency, or the independency of the Christian congregation, internally and externally, is now to be regarded as a part of the Scriptural development of the constitution of Christ's kingdom. That principle we hold to be of essential importance, as the nearest approximation to a safeguard over the liberties of a Christian people which infinite wisdom could devise, and, at the same time, only a natural development of the law of human association in its purest form.

This principle was intended to be universally adopted and inviolable. It was instituted as the rule. Nothing contrary to it was ever enjoined, enforced, exemplified in the apostolic age. No testimony can carry us farther than this. If nothing more was done in that age of institution by inspiration, if every community of believers was constituted a self-governing body, if every church without exception was local, congregational, and independent, then the mind of apostles, or, in other words, the mind of the Spirit is revealed, and there is no Divine warrant for anything else. If, in addition to this,—if, in contravention of this, we admit human warrant, we may admit any thing, and

had better cease to inquire after the mind of the Spirit altogether.

Congregational independency, however, as we have already observed, did not forbid *union* between the several churches of Christ, when that union was desirable, and disconnected from every thing involving authority. So far from forbidding union, it was instituted in order to it, that it might be genuine and safe, not fictitious and dangerous. Just as the laws of England, which defend the personal rights and property of every English subject, making every man's home his castle, into whichever the king may not intrude against the owner's will, have laid the foundation for confiding intercourse and social union amongst all classes, on terms of mutual trust and good faith; so the laws of Christ, by making every church in every place independent of every other, with whose individual rights and liberties none may interfere, have laid the foundation for sympathy, fellowship, association, union, and mutual helpfulness between the several churches of Christ, on terms of perfect confidence. When men are huddled together in one house—as in a poorhouse, workhouse, or hospital—in wards which belong not to the occupiers, and into which officers, masters, governors may enter at any time, and all of which are under one general superintendence,—it is not denied that there may be no small degree of apparent union, or rather a coming together of the parties thus resident, which may at times be connected with the exhibition of good feeling and mutual sympathy; but it cannot be denied on the other hand, that in such a case the union is artificial rather than natural, arising from accident rather than choice, and more likely to engender collision, strife, ill will, and mutual hate, in consequence

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of the compulsoriness of identical locality, rather than unity of friendship and love.

Similar to this is the condition of the churches of Christ, wherever they are united on a principle of compulsion under one general superintendency, instead of being independent, and thereby free to unite on a principle of choice. The larger the association in such a case, the more frequent the causes of collision, and the less intimate the union. Wherever the tree is to spread out its branches far and wide, all closely connected, and yet none interfering with or offering detriment to another, the growth must be natural, each branch occupying the precise place which nature, and nature alone, is sagacious enough to provide.

But if the union between the churches of the Apostolic era was preserved from becoming authoritative and centralizing by the independency of each local church, it was also preserved from being injured by, and from becoming dangerous to the civil interest, by being fenced round and cut off from all civil connexion and authority whatsoever, whether municipal, provincial or national. This is what we designate the third principle of independency, not as distinct from the former two, much less as opposed to them, but as a further development of them, in reference to the churches universally, considered in the aggregate\* and in relation to the world and its rulers.

This principle may be stated in the following terms:—THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THEIR AGGREGATE CHARACTER ARE INDEPENDENT OF ALL STATE

\* I use the term *aggregate* in reference to the visible churches of Christ, and the term *catholic* in reference to the spiritual, and, therefore, invisible oneness of all Christ's people.

CONNEXION, SANCTION, INFLUENCE, AND SUBORDINATION WHATSOEVER, AS INDEPENDENT COMMUNITIES WHOSE CATHOLICITY OR ONENESS IS RELIGIOUS AND FOR RELIGIOUS ENDS ONLY.

The first thing provided for by Christ in reference to the adaptation of his holy religion to man was, that every individual Christian should be free to think, worship, and act in his religious capacity, as being subject to Christ and his Word alone. The second thing provided was, that each congregational church should be free to manage its own religious affairs in all matters pertaining to social worship and fellowship, at the same time without violation of the principles involved in the provisions of the first. The third thing was, that the churches of Christ in their aggregate or united character, should never present such an associate aspect *to* the civil power in any district, province, or nation, in any part of the world, as should undermine its rightful authority; never desire, seek, or derive such an influence *from* the civil power as should lead to an aggregate corporate authority of the Church over its component parts.

This is a point much to be insisted upon, and is therefore clearly, unequivocally developed in the New Testament, in statements expressly announcing it, in institutions observing it, and in practices proceeding upon it as an implied and essential truth.

What announcement can be more emphatic than that of Jesus Christ himself, when he witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate; when in the presence of the representative of civil power and authority, he said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now



is my kingdom not from hence." \* The great Prophet and Head of the Church, the great Teacher of the world, the King of Zion, to whom every Christian in his individual capacity, and every church in its congregational capacity, and all the churches in their aggregate capacity, are subject, authoritatively announces the essential separateness of his kingdom from every thing worldly and temporal, from every thing partaking of secular influence, from every thing associated with physical and civil power! The base insinuation that Jesus thus spoke of the separateness of his kingdom from that of this world, because his subjects were then few and weak, but would not have us to interpret his words as reaching to those times when civil authority should come over to his side and espouse his cause, has been fully exposed and branded, and needs not to be seriously refuted again.†

\* John xviii. 36.

† Whately's Kingdom of Christ, essay i.—"It is recorded of an ancient king of Egypt—one of the Ptolemies—that he employed a celebrated architect to build a magnificent lighthouse for the benefit of shipping, and ordered an inscription in honour of himself to be engraved on it. The architect, it is said, though inwardly coveting the honour of such a record for *himself*, was obliged to comply; but made the inscription on a plaster resembling stone, but of perishable substance. In the course of years this crumbled away; and the next generation saw *another* inscription, recording the name, not of the king, but of the architect, which had been secretly engraved on the durable stone below. Now, just such a device as this is attributed to our Lord and his apostles, by those who believe them to have designed that secular power should hereafter be called in to enforce the Christian faith, though all such designs were *apparently* disavowed, in order to serve a present purpose. According to such interpreters, "My kingdom is not of this world," was only an inscription on the perishable plaster; the design of "coercing and punishing," by secular power, all op-

The disclaimer which he puts upon all worldly connexion is as emphatic as words can make it. The language "else would my servants fight" shows that if it had not been his design to introduce a purely religious dispensation, which should extend its influence solely in the hearts of his subjects, and which in no case should come into union with, so as to be regulated or influenced by, secular and civil governments; then would he have acted, in all his career, on a different principle, and by wholly different agencies. Who cannot picture to himself how the Redeemer would have made his entrance into this world, and have exhibited the majesty of his power, if any such design as that which he disclaimed had been his! Would it not have been so arranged in the counsels of heaven, that the infant form which was cradled in a manger should be ushered into the world in circumstances suitable to the dignity of the Prince of all the kings of the earth, amidst the gaze of monarchs and the awe-struck homage of attendant rulers, every earthly throne the while paling its golden lustre, and the world's glory fading into insignificance before the

ponents of the true faith, was, it seems, the engraving on the stone beneath. "Render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's," was but the outward part of the inscription; the addition was an inner hidden engraving, directing that Christians, when become strong enough, should compel both Cæsar and his subjects—all rulers and all citizens—either to acknowledge the true faith, or to forfeit their civil rights. It was the outside inscription only that ran thus:—"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man; . . . the powers that be are ordained of God." The secret characters on the stone said, "Take care, as soon as possible, to make every ordinance of man submit to *you*," and to provide that none but those of your own body shall *be* in authority; and that they shall use that authority in enforcing the profession of your religion."

splendor of the new-born Head of all principality and power! Would not that countenance, which was "more marred than the face of any man," have beamed with the conscious look of majesty, subduing the pride of every merely earth-born prince, and quelling every appearance of disloyalty by the lightning glances of his eye and the terrors of his clouded brow! Would not that voice, which uttered the accents of one "meek and lowly in heart," have been listened to when it issued from the lips of one enthroned, as the voice of God, every stern rebuke reverberating as thunder, and every word of approval breathing a pledge of bliss! Would not that hand, which was so often extended to bless the humble and the poor, have grasped and wielded, not in impotency of show, but amidst all the proofs of a more than human power, the sceptre of unlimited dominion! Would not that form, the image of which is in every mind as that of one who mysteriously suffered a voluntary humiliation, through which only occasionally the gleams of divinity were permitted to shine, have become associated by this time, in every mind, with the images of greatness alone, as a form which once rose aloft over all human forms—the very ideal of sculptured majesty—the model of the incarnation of a God!

But it was not so. Christ did not come to give any exaggerated views of physical strength, worldly power, or civil supremacy. The world had seen quite enough, before his coming, of the pomp and circumstance of earthly dominion, quite enough of the show and "observation" of artificial authority. He came to reveal a spiritual world in the soul of man, infinitely transcending everything visible in the outward world

of sense, the dominion of which was and ever is immeasurably beyond every appliance of secular influence, and whose subjugation is to be effected only by a sovereignty kindred to itself. Therefore it was that Christ came preaching the kingdom of heaven, and teaching the people, diffusing the truth, revealing the character and will of the Eternal, pouring the rays of light upon orbs benighted, and shedding beams of peace and joy into the distracted and bewildered spirit; by parable and promise and precept, by lessons simple and sublime, and, above all, by the one great illustrative act of his own vicarious death and sacrifice, demonstrating to the family of man that each member of it had a Father in heaven—a God of holiness and boundless mercy, who was willing to forgive all moral defect in his earth-born creatures, and to lead them back to the knowledge, love, and service of that Great Spirit from whom they had derived their own. In the accomplishment of this worthy end he rejected for himself, and disallowed for his followers and those whom he sent forth in his name, every secular influence. His truth was his kingdom, and its throne was to be set up in the human heart alone. “All power is mine in heaven and on earth” described the resources of his government; “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations—preach the gospel unto every creature,” was the all-embracing and exclusive instrumentality by which the ends of that government were to be realized.

Nor were the apostles unfaithful to their trust. In all their ministry they were so guided by the spirit of their glorified Lord, that in no instance did they ally, or seek to ally, the world's influences with those which alone had been appointed by heaven. The

institutions and the teaching of the apostles corresponded with the dictum of their Great Master before Pontius Pilate. All was subservient to spiritual ends. While the world frowned around, their doctrines won their way to many hearts, and their institutions were a simple outward framework of social observance, suited to the spiritual ends they were intended to subserve. They spoke to the reason and conscience of man; and when men listened and believed, and were gathered together in communities, they vaunted not of new-grown power arising from numbers, but still preserved "the things of God" distinct from "the things of Cæsar." While the influence of Christianity, as inculcated by them, was to permeate the whole man, and the whole of society, and ultimately the whole world, it was to do this without any alliance of the gross and corrupting in human nature, without any adventitious aid from the authority of social aggregation, without any coercion derived from secular and civil institutions. The fairest flower that blooms has its localization in earthly soil, and is so far connected with the earth; but the secret processes by which it is elaborated are the result of vital impulses which an unseen power alone can afford, and the beauties and odours by which it regales the sense are never associated with the gross material from which it may have derived nutriment, and in the midst of which it springs up as the creation of a wonder-working hand. In like manner, Christianity is a development in the world, but is not of the world. Its growth and perfection are the result of fostering influences, which the Divine truth and Spirit alone can supply.

It is a great mistake to suppose that the apostles,

equally as Christ himself, might not have used worldly influence and have procured civil authority, had they desired it, or rather, had they been permitted to desire it. To doubt or deny this, is to deny that they had the power ascribed to them in the sacred record. Did not "God work with them"? Did they not effect miracles? Did they not both kill and save alive? And if so, was not the same amount of power, or a lesser, sufficient to have brought about a secular alliance between the governments of this world and the Christian associations which they formed? Is it harder to subdue the heart of a king—of an emperor—than the hearts of thousands of his subjects? Is it less difficult to raise the dead, than to bow the will of monarchs to the designs of heaven?

Unquestionably, if it had been the will of Christ, if it had not been in entire opposition to the genius of his gospel and the nature of his kingdom, he would have *established* his religion in the era of its first introduction and institution in the world. Had it been in accordance with the design of Him who had all power in heaven and on earth, he would, either personally or through his apostles, have supplanted at once all human dominion by his own, or have compelled the world's rulers to lend all the weight of their authority in the propagation of his truth. The fact that this was not done, but avoided and forbidden, is and ever will be the condemnation of those who, in the name of Christianity, court the arm of secular power, as well as of those who, whether moving in higher or lower grades, have either used or delegated their authority as civil rulers for the accomplishment of religious ends. The Word and practice both of Christ and his apostles are entirely opposed to every prin-

ciple of secular alliance in reference to the affairs of Christ's kingdom. Until the age of Constantine the churches of Christ knew nothing of such unhallowed confederacy, and since the age of Constantine to the present, no one thing has done so much to retard the spiritual progress of Christianity amongst men, and deceive the nations in respect to her real character, as this very thing. Even now truth lies bleeding, and charity is wounded, and Christians are divided, throughout the whole of nominal Christendom, in proportion as this Satanic device prevails. Neither will the churches of Christ, and the Christian men who compose them, become one, until a great reformation take place in this respect, and the kingdom of Christ be universally acknowledged as essentially and eternally distinct and separate from the kingdoms of this world.\*

The point we have endeavoured to establish in these remarks, is one of vital importance ; and therefore we have given it a separate consideration, although it is not essentially distinct from, but only a wider development of, the other principles of Independency. When mankind, under any form of organization, civil or ecclesiastical, are within reach of power and domination, they are apt to stretch forward to obtain it ; and therefore it was of the last importance that the prospective spread of Christianity, and multiplication of Christian

\* The kingdoms of this world will undoubtedly become " the kingdoms of God and his Christ ;" but this will be either by their subordination to purely civil ends, through the agency of Christian men, or by their absorption into the kingdom of Christ, as being no longer needed. When all men are honest, and there is no fear of the violation of human liberty, what need of civil power, or the show of it ? The magistrate is only " a terror to evil-doers ;" but when there is no fear of evil-doing, what need of such a terror !

churches in the earth, should be connected with an announcement and institution of principles calculated to repress the spirit of human aggrandizement. Who knows not how it is possible for error and corruption to creep in at all doors? If the individual Christian be instructed to keep himself free from the influence of the world in all his religious performances; if the society of Christians meeting in one place be instructed to keep itself free from the same influence, and be so organized as to be perpetually taught the same lesson in its very separateness and self-government; it may nevertheless happen that a number of individuals and churches, when they become a majority in a nation, or otherwise possess a preponderating influence, may do those things, or connive at and secretly sanction those proceedings, in their aggregate capacity, which they would never dream of in their congregational and separate character; as in America, where men, boasting of their freedom, and even parading their liberty, become, in their corporate and aggregate character, the worst abettors and agents of slavery. It is not sufficient, therefore, that individual Independency, and communal or congregational Independency, be exhibited as the law of the New Testament institutions in reference to religion operating upon human society; aggregate Independency, or the essential separateness of the churches of Christ, in their aggregate aspect, from all worldly alliances whatsoever, must be held up to the distinct apprehension of Christian men, as equally a portion of the law of Christ.

Nor is this matter without interest to statesmen and civil rulers. When they have been taught to confide in the churches of Christ, as a number of congre-



gations existing for religious and moral ends alone; when they cease to fear the ambition of the church and its officers; when they have learned that no aggression ever can or will be made upon their lawful authority as civil rulers; they will not seek to ally themselves to that to which they can ally themselves only nominally, nor to subvert that which does not interfere with their purely secular dominion. The reason why statesmen and civil rulers have sought to connect themselves with the church, under one form or another, has ever been either the fear of the church's obtaining an ascendancy over them, or a desire to make the church's well organized instrumentality a tool for the more effectual accomplishment of their secular aims. When civil rulers have confidence that the existence and operations of the churches of Christ are for religious ends only, and are expressly cut off by Divine institution from all civil connexion whatever, they will look on without jealousy and without any desire for the amalgamation of interests. When they are able to see that the churches are moving heavenward, according to the design of their Great and Sovereign Head, whilst *their* civil rule moves earthward and for purely temporal ends, they will no more seek to bring the two kinds of movement under one superintendence, than to make the moon's orbit concentric with that of the earth, or God's angels wear the livery of this lower world.

In the present age of evangelizing effort, it is more important than ever that this third principle of Independency should be known, explained, and boldly espoused. If the Christian religion is to be diffused, as most Christian men believe it ultimately will be, amongst all nations, it must sooner or later be ascer-

tained in what way, when all men and nations are Christian, the church shall exist as distinct from the world. When there are no worldly men or women—when all are the subjects of that kingdom which is not of this world—how shall the church be known in its church capacity? According to the law of institution laid down in the New Testament, all will be easily settled. Each locality will have its own local church still; union between the churches, in so far as practicable or necessary, will still exist; but there will be no aggregate incorporation of churches in district, province, or nation. Civil affairs will be conducted by civil officers, in so far as their functions may be needed, all citizens and subjects rendering a ready obedience; while the conduct of religious affairs will be superintended by the churches' officers, in their religious capacity only. The religious interests of a nation will be promoted by religious institutions alone, although those who are associated in their promotion may have other office than that which is religious; and the civil interests of a nation will be promoted by civil institutions alone, although those who promote them, and preside over their management, may have other office than civil, elsewhere than in their civil capacity. The two ends being distinct; the means of accomplishing them will be distinct also. The one wheel of a nation's government will move on smoothly, being moved by religious men, but not in their religious capacity; and the many wheels of the churches' government will move on smoothly, being moved by religious men in their religious capacity only. As the soul's functions are separate from, though resident in those of the body, and the body's functions separate from, though in close neighbour-

good with those of the soul ; so will the operations of the churches be distinct and separate from those of the civil government ; while the operations of the civil government will be distinct and separate from those of the churches. There will be near neighbourhood and co-ordination, yet with perfect separation of movements. Heaven and earth will meet together, and yet not become identical ; the kingdom which is not of this world will, in all its local operations, be connected with, and yet maintain its absolute separateness from, the kingdoms that are of this world ; until earth be lifted up and absorbed in the perfectly safe rule of the God of Heaven, and a pure, perfect theocracy become again the embracing circle of all things.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE PRINCIPLES OF INDEPENDENCY CLEARED FROM MISCONCEPTION.

THE principles developed in the preceding chapters, are now to be regarded as the indication of the Divine will, in respect to the organization and constitution of the Christian church. There is nothing beyond them, or in contravention of them, in the writings of the New Testament. If, therefore, we use the New Testament as the sole authority and standard in our ecclesiastical practice, we shall be scrupulously careful to follow this rule, and this alone.

It seems needful, however, to prevent misconception, in reference to the relation which these principles hold to other essentials of Christianity, and the manner in which they are affected by the practices of professing Christians, whether adherents of a scriptural system of church organization and government or not.

Let it be understood, then, that these principles form only a portion of Christianity, as revealed from heaven,—that portion which is intended to subserve the spiritual and practical uses of the remainder. They constitute a shield for the defence of the liberties of Christian men, and, at the same time, a vehicle for

the diffusion of Christian doctrine. In themselves, and by themselves, apart from other principles, they are of little or no consideration. When there is no vital piety in an individual, the principle of personal Independency has nothing to defend worthy of the name. When the spirit of vital godliness does not animate a professedly Christian congregation, the principle of congregational Independency will not become a substitute for it, will not tend to edification, will not evangelize, will not effect any manner of work. When the churches or congregations are not those of "the faithful," the principle of aggregate Independency will not by itself supply the defect, or conduce to union, sympathy, and co-operation. These principles are revealed as those by which *Christian* men are to be shielded and benefited in all the operations of genuine piety. It is taken for granted that other principles also are in operation, which these are intended only to subserve.

A parallel may be justly drawn between the operation of these principles and those by which the personal, domestic, and national liberties of a people are secured in a free country. The personal liberty which a citizen enjoys is an undeniable blessing. In itself, however, and apart from other things, it is of little utility. Where a man has no intelligence, character, possessions, resources, by and through which to act the part of a free man, his personal liberty becomes a mere negation. The domestic liberty which a family may possess, is undoubtedly a great advantage. But, in itself, and apart from the operation of those kindly, wise, and benevolent feelings and affections, which ought to kindle around every hearth, it is an advantage purely nominal. The

general liberty which a nation may acquire is an invaluable inheritance; but, unless the nation inherit or secure something more,—knowledge, virtue, industry, commerce, religion,—even this privilege, after which so many nations are sighing, is in effect an unappreciated and worthless thing. In all these particular exemplifications of liberty, it is manifest that something in addition to liberty is needful in order to the exhibition of its true worth. Whilst it is everything in order to the security and perfection of good, whether personal, domestic, or national, there must be the existence or prospect of that good before its value can be either seen or felt. So is it in reference to the principles of Independency. All the noble impulses and exercises of Christian godliness must be promoted if Christian Independency is to be any thing more than a mere name. The casket is of importance only when it enshrines and preserves within it the jewel of great price.

Such considerations as these will enable us to decide upon the merit of all objections founded upon the alleged inefficiency of Independency to accomplish the ends for which the churches of Christ exist. In some given instances, it may be observed, or it has been observed, that men professing to be Independents, have lamentably failed in their duty; and the conclusion drawn from such facts has been that the principles of Independency, by which these professedly Christian men have been distinguished, are in fault. Of course, it might be replied, that if there were examples of defect in one locality, there are the opposite examples of Christian zeal and abundant success in other localities and in other periods, which show that not the principles of Inde-

pendency are in fault, but something else. From the period in which the apostolic churches (or some of them) set the example, down to the present time, there have been noble instances of voluntary effort and self-denying exertion on the part of the Independent churches of Christ in maintaining the institutions and diffusing the doctrines of the gospel amongst mankind.

But, amply sufficient as these counter-facts are to meet the objection on a general or average view of the question, they do not practically meet it in any single instance, in any given locality, and are not likely to do so, because the real merits of the objection are not touched. Every system may present its varied record of successes and reverses; every form of church organization adopted by men, whether free or formal, whether scriptural or unscriptural, has been exhibited in connection with some amount both of good and evil. Even Popery, the most unscriptural of all forms of organization, has not been without some instances of real success in evangelizing the world; and even Independency, the only scriptural form (according to our view) of church organization, has not been without instances of inefficiency and failure. It is evident, therefore, that the true method of meeting the objection we have noticed is not the one too often adopted; but an enunciation of the broad distinction between piety and polity. Let it be seen, that while the principles of Independency are clearly revealed in Scripture, they are revealed only as a portion of a great whole; let it be seen, that they are revealed only as an outward framework of liberty for the preservation of something more important, and without which their value would be to a great extent inappreciable; let it be seen, that whilst they indicate

the methods by which genuine piety must operate when exhibited under a social organization, they can have little or nothing to indicate where such piety does not exist ; let it be seen that, as the flaming swords of cherubim guarded the gates of Paradise for the sake of the tree of life within the sacred enclosure, so these Divine principles guard all the entrances to the church of Christ, for the sake of the genuine manifestations of the spirit of life which are supposed to exist there ; and then no objection will ever be made to the principles themselves, on such grounds as those which we have been considering. It will at once be understood that the Word and Spirit of God are the appropriate sources of those influences which are to lead to piety, holiness, usefulness ; whilst the principles of Independency are only an outward framework of social organization, by which the operation of such piety, holiness, and usefulness, is to be regulated and preserved from injury.

If, for example, any men, or number of men or churches, professing to be Independent, fail in the exhibition of a loving or liberal spirit ; if they are supine, worldly, unaccustomed to the zealous support of their own religious institutions, niggardly in their contributions to the cause of Christ, divided among themselves and given to schism ;—if such a description is ever realized amongst professedly Christian men and churches, in connection with the maintenance of the principles of Independency ; those principles are no more in fault—are no more to be charged with the evils thus exhibited, than the gospel is to be charged with the unbelief, impenitency, impurity, which may be exhibited amongst those who hear it, or profess to receive it as a revela-



tion from heaven. The end of the gospel is to save ; but in order to this there must be faith, penitence, and holiness of life. In like manner, the end of the principles of Independency is not only liberty of conscience, but the edification of the body of Christ and the conversion of the world ; but in order to these there must be the diffusion of scriptural knowledge, faith, love, zeal, amongst those who profess to hold them. What the apostle has said respecting faith, when alone, may also be said of these principles : " As the body without the spirit is dead," so Independency without piety is dead also.

The only fair way of testing these principles, on utilitarian grounds, is to suppose their practical exhibition amongst a body of people wholly possessed of the right spirit. How will they work amongst such ? Will they not completely suit that condition of the church in which there is most of enlightened scriptural knowledge, vigorous faith, warm love, ardent zeal, and liberality ? Is it not a characteristic of genuine, and especially of great piety, that it is voluntary, springing from the individual conscience and heart, having its origin in self, and brooking no control from any quarter but that which is or is thought to be divine ? While a feigned and gregarious piety is made up of mere imitations, and is compatible with almost any assignable amount of compulsion, in the shape either of dogmatism, authority, or official superintendence ; genuine, real, vital religion, that kind of religion which will lead the possessor of it to suffer rather than to deny, and to die rather than to betray, admits no influence, authority, interference, but such as is congenial with itself. The principle of personal independency is exactly suited, then, to foster *as well as to develop* genuine piety in the individual.

Again, the characteristic of a healthy state of religion in a congregation or church is, that it is voluntary on the part of all the members composing the congregation, a simultaneous movement of all hearts in consequence of a number of individual convictions and impulses; not, as in a complicated piece of machinery, where all the separate parts are moved by one source of power acting mechanically upon them, but as in a rich meadow, where every individual root develops its own vital forces, and yet all send up the outgrowth of their individual life together. The second principle of Independency, which gives the power of self-government to every Christian congregation, suits itself to this characteristic. It forbids all compulsion; that is, it forbids everything approaching to a merely mechanical religion.

Yet once more the same characteristic belongs to a healthy state of religion when diffused over the widest possible surface, or, in other words, amongst the churches of Christ universally. That is not a happy state of things in which one may behold a vast aggregate of churches and congregations swayed this way or that, in one direction or another, as some one human authority may dictate; like so many puppets moved by wires from a common centre, or, like so many regiments of soldiers, marching with even step and in most orderly array, under the direction of a commander-in-chief. That is the most pleasing picture in which you may behold all the churches of Christ acting independently of one another, in so far as human authority is concerned, and yet in concert, because of identity of faith in the same essential truths, and identity of aims in respect to the great ends for which they individually exist; like flowers

which spring up simultaneously, and yet independently of one another, all over the earth in spring-time,—or the corn fields, which everywhere produce the same golden crop in the time of autumn. The third principle of Independency is suited to this characteristic of an universally diffused and scriptural piety amongst the churches of Christ. All worldly influence, interference, and authority are forbidden, that the churches universally may grow up naturally and spontaneously, as the result of influences derived from the truth alone, and under the fostering care of that great invisible Head who has promised to be with His people, even unto the end of the world.

If, in reply to all that has been advanced, it be said that other modes and plans of Church polity are better than the one we have been illustrating, we can only repeat what we have stated in respect to the paramount authority of that which is divinely revealed. It would not be difficult, although it would occupy much space, to show, that in proportion as the apostolic pattern has been departed from, the church has lost somewhat more or less of its purity or liberty. Even those who seem to have discovered justifying causes for deviating from the primitive model in various periods of the history of the Christian church, have acknowledged as much.\* Neither can it be questioned, that in modern times the various sections of the universal church are prosperous in proportion as the congregational and voluntary element is restored to its primitive place and power. But we are

\* Neander, for example, in his *History of the Three First Centuries*, vol. i. pp. 208—213. Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, cent. 2, part ii. sec. 3, &c.

not prepared to put the system we espouse to the test on any such principle as this. The apparent success of a system is not a fair criterion in all cases. Human sagacity is not competent to the task of applying it. Proselytism may be mistaken for conversion—uniformity for unity—formality and torpor for harmony—worldly zeal and ambitious enterprise for Christian activity—ostentatious pietism for spiritual life—riches and emoluments for graces—and accession of numbers for divine success. “Judge not that ye be not judged,” is a caution as well as a maxim. And if it be so difficult to determine the real character of an individual, how impossible to carry on to a safe conclusion any such investigation as that which the test we are now considering would demand. Devoutly thankful are we that we are not shut up to any such hopeless method of determining the principles of Christian organization. The pattern, the model, the original and divinely instituted platform of church polity is before us in the Divine Word; it is our privilege and our duty to follow that. We cannot be far wrong when we tread in the steps of inspired apostles, and hold fast by the principles which they have sanctioned.

There yet remains another point, respecting which misconception may exist—namely, the extent to which the principles of Independency are obligatory, in connexion with the practical duties of Christian fellowship.

Let it be observed, then, that whatever addition may be made to these principles, nothing must be allowed to subvert them. There is no warrant for any addition which shall affect them as principles. While, in matters of mere detail, each church is at

liberty to follow its own judgment, no invasion must, at any time, or under any circumstances, be made upon individual, congregational, and aggregate liberty. When details swell out into a change of principle, they are as unscriptural as if the principle were directly supplanted or subverted; but when they affect mere convenience, and are adopted without difference of opinion, amongst those who may be supposed to regulate their conduct by them, liberty and independence are still enjoyed.

It may be of advantage, perhaps, to illustrate this point more fully.

Let it be remembered, then, that there is an essential distinction between a principle and the mere details associated with its practical observance. While the former, like a stream, flows in a definite direction, and in a clearly ascertained channel, the latter, like the eddies and bubbles which move along with it and upon its surface, are susceptible of an endless variation. The laws of development in vegetable and animal structures, for example, are principles both definite and fixed; but, whilst the laws are unalterable, there is ever combined with their operation an infinite variety in the vegetable and animal forms themselves—so much so, that no two were ever exactly alike. Every plant has its own shape and hue; every animal has its own distinctive and peculiar configuration. If all the roses that ever bloomed were spread together on the lap of mother earth, no two could be found that were in every respect alike; if all the men that ever lived were collected on the plains of some vast world, no two countenances could be discovered in which some difference might not be detected. And yet, amidst all this variety of detail,

every rose might be known to be a rose, and every countenance to be human. The same distinction is observable between the principles and details of moral conduct. Although God exacts a just homage and obedience from all his intelligent creatures, it is probable that no two of all his angels render him exactly the same service, or comply with his requirements in an identical course of behaviour. Variety in detail, unity in principle, seems to be the established order of the universe.

Let these illustrations be applied to the three principles of Independency, that their true character may be appreciated.

While nothing may be done which shall prove subversive of the *individual* Independency of Christian men, that individual independency is compatible with the appliance of innumerable influences adapted to benefit those who are shielded by it from unlawful aggression. While no form of church government or procedure may be instituted which shall violate *congregational* Independency, the Christian community is at liberty to adopt an endless variety of expedients, (always supposing that they are not inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity and the revealed rules of Christian duty,) in order to accomplish the diversified ends for which it exists. While no connexion may be formed between the churches of Christ and the rulers of this world, by virtue of which the principle of *aggregate* Independency may be subverted, there are legitimate methods by which the churches of Christ may exert a benign influence upon the world, and, on the other hand, there are methods by which the world may create facilities for the expanding operations of the churches; even as

earth and ocean, while mutually observant of the distinctive laws of their existence, operate beneficially upon one another in giving and receiving, each in its turn, those exhaled influences which tend to the invigoration and lasting freshness of both. Once for all, let it be understood that Independency, in all its developments, is only a protective principle ; a cover under whose grateful shade every goodly plant may grow ; a fence thrown around the spiritual existence embodied in the individual, the community, and the church at large, for its preservation, that it may thereby be free to respond to every heavenly impulse. But, in order to the accomplishment of all the ends for which Independency has been instituted, there must be spiritual life and growth. The word must have free course and be glorified. The Divine blessing must descend. In vain the Divine provision which secures spiritual liberty, if that liberty be not exercised in the cultivation of all those habitudes, and the performance of all those offices, which are the characteristics of Christ's free-men !

In the above remarks, we have drawn the circle in which, and in which alone, expediency may operate. In matters of mere detail, expediency will find ample scope. The time, and place, and mode of worship—the season and order of Christian fellowship—the arrangements which tend to the comforts and success of the social community—the methods by which the resources of the churches may be applied to the ever-shifting exigencies of the world ;—all these are matters which a wise expediency is at liberty to determine. But beyond this expediency may not go. When it usurps the place of principle, liberty is violated, *Christ's law invaded*, and his institutions undermined.

To suppose, as some have done, that expediency is the sole guide of Christ's people in matters pertaining to church organization and discipline, is to reflect upon the wisdom of the Great Head of the church; for, what head of a worldly community even, would leave that community without laws for its government? Either Christ has enacted laws and appointed institutions for the observance of His people, or there is no warrant for church organization at all. If the latter hypothesis be true, what enormities have been practised upon Christian men in every age of the church's history! What frauds! what oppression! what a shameful soliciting of men, to place themselves under this and that form of church polity! If the former be true, who dare set at naught the appointments of Christ? Who will have the effrontery to put forth any scheme in opposition to that which Infinite Wisdom has revealed?

It will now be apparent in what light the principles of Independency are to be regarded, and for what purposes they have been instituted. The end—the great end for which the frame-work of the church's constitution has been Divinely established is, that the genius of Christianity may be preserved unimpaired amidst the social developments in which it is intended to be manifested. The perfecting of the saints, the edifying of the body of Christ, is the Saviour's design in all the agencies and ministrations of His appointment. The lively stones of the spiritual temple are, as separate stones, to be built upon the one and only foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; and yet, after such a sort as that the whole building



is to be fitly framed together—a vast and united aggregate for an habitation of God through the Spirit. The practical problem which the providence and grace of God are represented in Scripture as solving, out of the materials which humanity afford, by means of Divine truth and Divine institutions, is, to unite in one holy brotherhood *all* the called, and chosen, and faithful, and yet to present *every* man perfect before God. Hence the prayer of the Saviour—all comprehending in respect to the destiny of the church, and reaching forward in its anticipations to the most distant ages—“That they **ALL** may be perfect in **ONE**.” Hence also, the announcement of the same Divine design by the apostle of the Gentiles—that “all may come unto the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus.” To subserve that great end the independency of individual Christians and churches has been guaranteed by the laws of Christ’s kingdom, as the only principle by which it can be realized.

We now take leave of this portion of our subject, in order to review the history of the church of Christ in ages succeeding the apostolic. In so doing, a solemn feeling pervades our spirit. We seem to be passing from holy to common ground. Our guide is no longer a Divine book, but a number of uninspired witnesses. Henceforth, our position is completely changed. The personal ministry of the Great Head of the church has ceased. Apostles no longer watch over the disciples. Every living inspired voice is silent. The footsteps of infallible men no longer awaken the echoes in the peaceful vale, where the sheep are gathered. The age of miracles is past. Nature resumes her ordinary circle of operations. Pro-

phetic warnings sound in our ears respecting grievous wolves that shall devour the flock, and false teachers that shall lead astray; but no infallible living guide remains to set things in order, to rebuke, or even to reprove. All ages are now on a level—the first century no nearer to the source of inspired truth than the last. We seem to leave the bright circle in which heavenly voices, actually blending with the human, syllable forth the indications of the Divine will, directing, instructing, warning, reproofing; and we descend to the common earthly ground, where human voices alone are heard—a mingled and confused sound—and only replete with truth and harmony in so far as they echo the sentiments of the WRITTEN WORD.

Let us descend, then, and “try the spirits, whether they be of God!”



## **BOOK II.**

**THE GRADUAL DEPARTURE OF THE CHURCH INTO  
ANTI-CHRISTIAN ERROR, UNTIL THE TIME  
OF THE REFORMATION.**



## CHAPTER I.

### THE STARTING POINT OF POST-APOSTOLIC HISTORY.

THE apostles having fulfilled their commission as the inspired teachers and rulers of the churches formed under their superintendence, and having departed this life to be once more united to their Lord, the entire body of the faithful scattered throughout the various regions of the world were thenceforth left to the instructions they had given, and the institutions they had established, as their sole guide in all future time. Their living voices are no longer to be heard ; their personal presence is no longer to be approached. It seemed fit to the wisdom of God to remove his ambassadors from that revolted portion of his dominions to which he had sent them with his messages of mercy, after they had fully disclosed his will. He might have retained their services, or the services of men similarly qualified, by whom the churches might have been ordered and superintended from age to age, even to the end of time, had it comported with his designs. But he did not. Having authoritatively communicated his will in the first age of the church's history, by the living voice and personal ministrations of the apostles, in the first instance, and afterwards by inspired writings which were to hand down to distant periods the

stance of all that had been Divinely taught, whether by way of doctrine or institutions, it seemed good to Him who is Head over all things to his church to withdraw this extraordinary agency, and to conduct the affairs of his kingdom henceforth by ordinary human agency alone. The word of Christ and the spirit of Christ remained, as the only infallible guide to mankind in all matters pertaining to their religious interests.

Henceforth it became the duty of Christian men to "seek out the word of the Lord," and to follow its instructions. The foundation on which Christians and Christian churches were exclusively to build, was that which had been so clearly defined: "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Now that inspired authority in the persons of living men had left the church, no human authority was to occupy its place. The written word was to be the sole substitute for a personal apostolic authority, while the Holy Spirit was promised to accompany that word when diffused amongst men by teaching, and preaching, and other kindred means.

Before the last of the apostles had entered into rest, the word of the gospel had sounded forth into all the principal regions of the earth. East and west, north and south, churches, consisting of greater or smaller numbers, had been planted. Arabia, India, Africa, Europe, had been summoned to yield their spiritual converts to the King of Zion,\* and many had gladly obeyed. The stars which had been kindled in the firmament, though not thickly clustering, were suffi-

\* Milman's *Hist. of Christianity*, book ii. chap. iii.; Neander's *Hist. of the Christian Religion*, &c.; Rose, vol. i. pp. 73—78; Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. xv.

cient to have irradiated the world. If true to their character and design, to the resources with which they were entrusted, and to the spirit of life whose agency and co-operation had been made the subject of promise, they might have chased away the clouds of ancient darkness, and suffused the earth with the radiance of heaven.

In order that the great ends of their existence might be accomplished, unimpeded by worldly contaminations, all the churches were established, according to what we have advanced in a former portion of our work, on a basis of Independency suited to the genius of the new era. Every church, whether large or small, whether in city, town, or village, was a complete organization in itself. The members composing the churches were Christians, and Christians only; avowed and recognized disciples of Christ. All were on a common footing of independent faith and practice. No man was called "Lord;" one was their Master, even Christ, and all were satisfied with occupying the place of "brethren." The officers of the churches were their servants, chosen by each several church, as their service might be needed. Humility, experience, purity of life, spiritual gifts, were the only qualifications for office, which was at the same time more onerous than remunerating, more responsible than profitable. The spiritual oversight and rule was committed to one class of men, called elders or bishops;\* and the secular management of

\* "It is therefore certain that every church was governed by a union of elders or overseers (*i. e.* presbyters or bishops) chosen from among themselves, . . . in the age immediately succeeding the apostolic, of which we have unfortunately so few authentic memorials." Neander's Hist. of the First Planting, &c., vol. i. p. 169.



the church's affairs was entrusted, for executive purposes, to another class of men called deacons. At the same time, the members of the church collectively had the supreme power, and each member was at liberty to use his gifts for the edification of the rest. In the midst of Jewish and heathen darkness, these primitive churches shone, scattered here and there, like the peaceful lights which cheer the eye of a traveller as he approaches a populous region by night!

Nothing had transpired as yet in the history of any church to subvert the primitive organization. The apostolic ministry has only just ceased. The apostles themselves are held in full remembrance. Their spirit yet walks abroad. The sound of their voices still floats in every wind, "So we ordain in all the churches." While in respect to doctrine, where of necessity there is much wider room for latitude of opinion, there may be many heresies, as was the case during a great portion of the apostolic age; in respect to the more practical matter of organization, there is no deviation from the original model. Here and there individuals, departing from the spirit of the gospel, may strive insinuatingly for the pre-eminence, or churches may yield too much to individual or party influence. But there is no radical change at present. Liberty and right cannot be undermined in a day. All parties are too much interested in their own spiritual immunities, to submit to their invasion suddenly, and all at once. Persecution keeps the churches in a healthy state. Dead branches are broken off by such winds, while those which are full of sap become more healthy and sturdy, refusing to yield, and growing apace.

Hierarchical pretensions have not yet budded. The servant has not had leisure to mount the ladder

of a worldly ambition. Facilities have not yet been afforded for the encroachments of pre-eminence. The two orders have not yet become multiplied. All is simplicity; and office is not yet aspired to for the sake of worldly influence or secular ends.

Synods and councils are, as yet, unheard-of things; and generations must pass away before any dreams respecting them can be realized. While there is much of intercourse between Christians, as they pass from town to town for purposes of merchandise or in order to avoid persecution; and between churches also in seasons of oppression or famine; there are no symptoms of visible church union, much less of amalgamation. Catholicity does not extend beyond the sphere of the spiritual and invisible. The Christian communities in the cities or towns are independent of those in the country; while those in the country are independent of such as exist in the towns. All is simplicity. It is not yet imagined that majorities can determine what is truth; that numbers can supersede the use of arguments. Divisions and heresies arise, as they have arisen from the beginning; but each church manages such things as come within its own province. The apostles have left no precept, instituted no precedent, for settling such matters by any other means than those which already exist. Each church is agreed respecting its own faith and practice, and is based on the understanding of such agreement. If novelties, whether of doctrine or discipline, are introduced, the natural reply on the part of the individual church is, "We have no such custom, neither have the churches of Christ." Thus latitudinarianism is excluded, and, at the same time, liberty enjoyed. No need is felt for councils when

each church manages its own affairs. Extra-congregational presbyteries, and diocesan domination are no where dreamed of, no where required. It takes time—and many successive changes—and the intervention of many questionable influences—before such things can be brought about !

Such was the ecclesiastical condition of the churches of Christ at the close of the apostolic era. Their political relations were equally remote from every thing involving a violation of Independency. To patronize Christianity had not yet entered into the mind of the world's rulers ; to exterminate it—if that could be accomplished—was their only aim. While here and there, on occasions, and at wide intervals, influential men, and even subordinate magistrates, favour the new religion, they have scarcely courage enough to do so openly and before the world. Like Nicodemus they are afraid to come to Jesus, except by night. It is a proscribed religion—an illicit thing \*—an atheistic system †—a branded fellowship.‡ Such is the prevalent idea of the world and its rulers respecting Christianity at this early period. The Roman emperors, however much they may differ from one another in other respects, are agreed in this ; and the religion of the cross is alternately condemned and feared.§ All other religions are tolerated ; even patronized and

\* *Religio illicita.*

† ἄθεοι, ἀσεβείς

‡ *Sodalitia illicita—Collegia illicita.*

§ Both Neander and Gieseler discredit the testimony of Tertullian who affirms that Tiberius proposed a bill to the Senate “ that Christ should be received amongst the Roman gods.” Neander’s *Hist. of the Christian Religion*, &c. Rose, vol i. p. 88, 89. Gieseler’s *Ecc. Hist.* vol. i. p. 81.

established. Not satisfied with her own myriad deities, all the varieties of pagan superstition receive the formal homage of Rome. The followers of Jesus alone are a persecuted and oppressed race, and their faith alone is a most pernicious and detestable superstition.\* While in fact no detriment could ever happen to the empire in consequence of its diffusion, because it was cut off from all political relations and secular alliances, the moral influence of its disciples was such as to inspire the rulers with an instinctive dread. A virtue seemed to emanate from it, even under circumstances of oppression, like that which proceeded from Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, when those who sought to apprehend him went backward, and fell to the ground. Not coming from man, it could not amalgamate with human religions, and was feared all the more on that account. It was regarded, therefore, as the most odious and ineradicable of heresies; hateful to rulers because of its invisible potency, which not all the usual appliances of law could suppress;† hateful to the multitude, because of the purity, simplicity, austerity, with which it was ever combined. Again and yet again attempts are made to crush it, but in vain. Cruelty applies her tortures, the wild beasts are gorged with their prey, blood flows in torrents, the martyr flames ascend to heaven but the gospel triumphs! The more the heavenly plant is trodden under foot, the more rapidly it grows, and the

\* Pliny (lib. x. ep. 96) speaks of it as a *Superstitio prava et immodica* . . . a perverse and extravagant superstition.

† Pliny (lib. x. ep. 96) speaks of the Christians as the subjects of a pertinacious and inflexible obstinacy—*pertinaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem*, &c. This is the famous letter to the Emperor Trajan.

more fresh the verdure of its leaf. Floods of persecution cannot quench the fire which has descended from heaven ; on the contrary, like that which blazed on the altar of Elijah, the greater the obstruction the more fiercely it burns !

Such was the condition of Christianity and of the church when the voice of inspiration ceased to be a living voice, and became enshrined henceforth in the Written Word. It is now our business to trace the history of those changes which transpired in succeeding ages. But our readers must understand precisely what it is that we have to do, and how we propose to accomplish it.

To enumerate all the influences which have contended against the primitive faith and institutions of the Christian church—to note their character and origin—to review all the changes in doctrine and practice which have resulted from them—is the work of the ecclesiastical historian. Such a work, embracing many ages, involves an almost incalculable amount of research. But for our purpose, so much as this is not needed. A more simple view of the matter will suffice. In tracing the course of a stream, pure at its source and fed by the dews of heaven, through a country inhabited by men, it is not needful to do more than indicate the fact that corruption has tainted it and changed its primitive character. To analyze all the ingredients that have entered into its composition as it has passed onwards, may be necessary, if the exact nature of the component parts is required ; but it is scarcely needful, if the object be merely to ascertain the fact that a change has taken place. So in reference to our subject. If our object were to give an exact account of the ever-changing doctrines which have

been held under the name of Christianity, or of the constantly varied aspects which the nominal church of Christ has assumed in different ages since the apostolic, our task would be endless, and, in consequence of the contradictory testimonies which have been handed down to us, very imperfect. But such exactness of detail is not requisite. With the history of doctrines we have scarcely anything at all to do; and in reference to the constitution and organization of the Christian church, we shall be satisfied if, by appealing to indubitable testimony, we can show that great changes have from time to time taken place, which have resulted in a complete departure from the primitive pattern instituted in the age of Christ and his apostles. Our aim will be accomplished if, by applying the three principles of Independency—illustrated in the preceding portion of the present volume—as tests, we are thereby able to show that there was a period in the post-apostolic history of the church when all was primitive and simple, and that as time rolled on corruption made successive inroads upon the original constitution of things, in reference to the affairs of Christ's kingdom. We may not have the leisure or ability to analyze all the ingredients which at different periods have coalesced with or changed the character of the once pure and limpid stream; but it is not beyond the compass of ordinary industry to detect the fact that a gradual transformation has been effected.

Such, then, is the definite object we have before us. According to the views we have propounded, the farthest extreme to which a professed church, or number of professed churches, may go in departing from Christ's institutions in respect to church organization, is when all the three principles of Independency are wanting.

The nearest approximation to the apostolic pattern is when all the three principles of Independency are observed. Between these two extremes all gradations of comparative perfection or imperfection may exist. Here, then, are our tests! We shall examine the records of post-apostolic history, not for the purpose of ascertaining what the church was intended to be by its great Head, but for the purpose of learning how far professing Christians have adhered to or departed from the primitive model. We shall not enter upon our task prepossessed, as some have been, by the false notion that it is needful to watch all the chameleon changes of the church in order to know what Christ would have his church to be and do; but whilst making all allowances for human infirmity, as betrayed in the successive corruptions of Christianity, we shall set out with the conviction that all doctrine and all duty is revealed in the New Testament, and that ecclesiastical history can only indicate how far that doctrine and that duty have been appreciated by the professed disciples of Christ.

There is one point, however, in respect to which the lessons of post-apostolic history may teach us much; and to this we are anxious to draw attention, as a matter of some importance.

There is a law of physical science, called the law of *momentum*, according to which, a body, when set in motion, will continue to move after a given rapidity, and in a given direction, until the motion is impeded or turned aside, by counteracting or deflecting influences. A similar law is observable in the sphere of morals, and in reference to human institutions; and we shall apply it in the elucidation of our subject. If the apostles followed an uniform plan in the or-

ganization of Christian churches, during the entire period of their ministry; and if that plan was universally adopted during the apostolic age, it is reasonable to expect that, by virtue of a principle of *moral momentum*, such a plan of organization would be continued after that age for some time—at least until transforming influences were able to effect a change. The very early records of post-apostolic history, therefore, become of great importance as means of determining the correctness or incorrectness of any hypothesis which may be formed respecting what the apostolic plan and pattern really was. While later records are of little or no service in reference to such a point, the early records are invaluable, and the most early the most invaluable. It would be most illogical, for example, to test any hypothesis in respect to the apostolic pattern by what is recorded concerning the constitution of the Christian church in the fourth century; and yet more so to test it by the constitution of the church in the ninth; unless it could be shown that no deviation had taken place, during the interval between those periods and the apostolic. But if there be records of the first and second century, respecting the constitution of the Christian church as it then existed, it is most logical to examine those records for the purpose of ascertaining how far they corroborate or disprove any hypothesis which may be formed from the inspired records of the New Testament. Indeed, it is just here that the main use of post-apostolic testimony is discoverable. To take the guage of error, and measure the growth of impiety in successive periods of the church's history—to watch the workings of worldly ambition under the monk's cowland and the pope's tiara—to trace the effects of hierarchical aggrandize-



ment on the doctrines of the cross and the manners of the people—may not be without their uses ; but to read the human record for the purpose of testing one's interpretation of the Divine, is a labor more worthy, and likely to yield a more abundant recompense.

This, then, is the course we propose to follow. Starting from the apostolic era, with the hypothesis that the three principles of Independency were then fully developed, we shall enter upon an examination of the records of post-apostolic history, in order to see how that hypothesis is substantiated. Instead of passing rapidly over the early testimonies, as some have done, we shall lay them under contribution as being by far the most important in connection with our object. And if it shall appear, as we are convinced it will, that the nearer we ascend to the time of the apostles the more abundantly our hypothesis is confirmed, then we shall deem it no assumption to affirm that the principles of Independency are not only developed in the writings of the New Testament, but corroborated by the history of the church.

At the same time we propose to go a step further than this. We shall endeavour to trace the more important processes by which the simple institutions of primitive times became changed in successive ages, until every vestige of the Divine original was lost. This will bring us down to those periods in which the darkness of the night compelled men to sigh for the dawn, and thus in effect to anticipate the advent, of the Great Reformation.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE FIRST POST-APOSTOLIC AGE; OR THE AGE OF INDEPENDENCY.

[A.D. 80—167.]

THE title of the present chapter indicates the conviction at which we have arrived respecting the complexion of the church's constitution and organization in the earliest period of ecclesiastical history. It was but natural, on the principle of a moral momentum referred to a little way back, that the churches of Christ should remain for some time as the apostles had left them. In doctrine there might be change and difference of opinion, since this had happened and had become observable in the apostolic age; but it was hardly possible for principles involving rights and liberties to be soon parted with. There were only two ways, in fact, by which, on the supposition that the principles of Independency were instituted at first, any great deviation from them could be effected—namely, by a sudden convulsion in the religious world, or by a gradual transition to other principles as the result of a series of innovations. That the latter was the mode in which apostolic institutions were ultimately subverted, we hope to show as we advance.

It has been observed somewhere by a modern writer,\* that the attempt to separate fact from fable, in respect to the early history of nations, is like entering a stalactite cavern for the purpose of ascertaining where the parent rock terminates, and where the accretion begins. So great has the difficulty been felt to be, that for a long time our historians were accustomed to commence their works with what they designated the *fabulous* age. Modern research and sagacity, however, have done much towards separating the false from the real; and many substantial facts have been deduced from the shadowy myths or fables in which they lay hid from common eyes.

A similar difficulty has been felt in reference to the early history of the post-apostolic church—a difficulty not yet surmounted. Much, however, has been accomplished in modern times. The misconceptions and mis-statements of partial historians have been investigated and detected by keen eyes. The science of archæology has been built up on better foundations, and by more philosophical methods, than were wont to satisfy less recent writers. The same kind of criticism which effected a revolution of opinion in respect to the early periods of Roman and Grecian history, has been applied to the early periods of ecclesiastical history, and with somewhat similar results. Fables are yielding to facts; assumptions are giving place to well-sifted testimony; and sooner or later a wide-spread revolution must take place in the opinions of all thinking and religious men, in reference to the constitution, duty, and destiny of the church of Christ.

There are still some antiquated theories in con-

\* W. S. Lander.

nexion with systems of hierarchical pretension, which retain their hold upon the minds of interested abettors; but on the whole there is good augury for the future, and every fresh discovery is so much gained for the cause of spiritual freedom. The shades of the fathers no longer occupy that place in the temple of truth which was once yielded to them in the spirit of ignorance and servility. They are becoming *familiar* spirits; and the more they are interrogated the less ghostly and the more intelligibly do they reply. Mere names are no longer sufficient to awe mankind into the reception of dogmas inconsistent with the results of scriptural inquiry; and many an oracle through which the priestly spirit had simulated the voice of antiquity has become dumb. Ere long, as Milton has expressed it, the world will "quit its clogs," and the church become free.

The testimony of the most learned and impartial of modern ecclesiastical writers is all but unanimous in reference to the fact of the early Independency of the Christian church. Mosheim, the chief of the new school in Christian archæology,\* has headed one of his chapters "all the churches of the first age Independent;"† and in another has traced the consequences of departing from a primitive simplicity.‡ Neander, the worthy successor of Mosheim in this department of inquiry, has sufficiently indicated his views in the following terms: "The formation of the

\* Gibbon has availed himself largely of what he terms Mosheim's "masterly performance." *Decline and Fall*, &c., chap. xv.

† *De rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum*. See. primum, sect. xlviii.

‡ *Ibid.* sec. secundum, sect. xxiii.

Christian church, as it developed itself out of the peculiarities of Christianity, must essentially differ from that of all other religious unions. A class of priests, who were to guide all other men under an assumption of their incompetence in religious matters, whose business it was *exclusively* to provide for the satisfaction of the religious wants of the rest of mankind, and to form a link between them and God and godly things; such a class of priests could find no place in Christianity. While the gospel put away that which separated man from God, by bringing all men into the same communion with God through Christ; it also removed that partition wall which separated one man from his fellows, in regard to his more elevated interests. The same High Priest and Mediator for all, through whom all being reconciled and united with God, become themselves a priestly and spiritual race! One heavenly King, Guide, and Teacher, through whom all are taught from God! One faith! one hope! one spirit, which must animate all! one oracle in the hearts of all! the voice of the spirit which proceeds from God! and all citizens of one heavenly kingdom, with whose heavenly powers they have already been sent forth, as strangers in the world! When the apostles introduced the notion of a priest which is found in the Old Testament into Christianity, it was always only with the intention of showing, that no such visible distinct priesthood as existed in the economy of the Old Testament could find admittance into that of the New; that, inasmuch as free access to God and to heaven was once for all opened to the faithful through the one High Priest, Christ, they had become, by union with Him himself, a holy and spiritual people, and their calling was only this, namely, to consecrate

their whole life, as a sacrifice of thanksgiving for the mercy of God's redemption, and to preach the power and grace of Him who had called them from the kingdom of darkness into his wonderful light, and their whole life was to be a continued priesthood, a spiritual serving of God, proceeding from the affections of a faith working by love, and also a continued witness of their Redeemer. Comp. 1 Peter ii. 9. Rom. xii. 1, and the spirit and connexion of ideas throughout the whole epistle to the Hebrews. And thus also the furtherance of God's kingdom, both in general and in each individual community, the furtherance of the propagation of Christianity among the heathen, and the improvement of each particular church, was not to be the concern of a particular chosen class of Christians, but the nearest duty of every individual Christian. Every one was to contribute to this object from the station assigned to him by the invisible head of the church, and by the gifts peculiar to him, which were given him by God, and grounded in his nature—a nature, which retained, indeed, *its individual character*, but was regenerated and ennobled by the influences of the Holy Ghost.\* Elsewhere the same author speaks of the first churches as enjoying “a sisterly system of equality,” which was afterwards changed into “a system of subordination.”† Gieseler‡ and Coleman§ agree with Mosheim and Neander in all that is essential in their views on

\* Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c. ; Rose, vol. i. pp. 180—83.

† Ibid. vol. i. p. 208.

‡ Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. pp. 92, 93 ; 108, 109.

§ Coleman's Antiquities, &c., ch. ii. sect. iv., ch. iii. sect. i., vii.

this subject; while a host of names might be adduced from the class of general writers, who have frequently been referred to as candid witnesses for truth.\*

We are not content, however, with a reference to modern authorities on a matter of so much importance; but would draw our testimony from the originals. It so happens that they are neither very numerous nor voluminous. "The blessed Christians of those times," says Daille, "contented themselves with writing the Christian faith in the hearts of men, by the beams of their sanctity and holy life, and by their blood shed in martyrdom, without much troubling themselves with the writing of books."† "How do I long," says another author, "for the histories of Hegeppus and Julius Africanus; for the apologies of Aristides, Apollonius, Quadratus and Melito, and the excellent writings of Apollinaris, bishop of Hierapolis! What satisfaction would it be to my soul to understand where Athenagoras, Minutius Felix, and the other brave defenders of religion were born! What testimonies of their courage and learning, their virtue and piety, they gave to the world; and when and by what means they went into the grave, that I might contemplate the beauty of their achievements and celebrate their worth! . . . But these are happinesses only to be enjoyed in wish, and

\* *E. g.* Barrow, King, Stillingfleet, &c. See Hanbury's *Memorials of the Independents* (Introduction), and his *Introduction to Hooker's Eccles. Polity*, for a large array of modern testimonies; also Vaughan's *Preliminary View of the Papal System*, prefixed to his *Life of Wickliffe*. Perhaps the most valuable work on our general subject is Dr. George Campbell's *Lectures on Ecclesiastical History*.

† Right use of the Fathers, Translation, p. 5, London, 1651.

we that cannot be so fortunate must be content with our present portion, and the knowledge that is yet by a benign Providence left us, of that small company of wise and good men that adorned the church.”\*

Small, however, as may be the amount of contemporaneous testimony that has descended to us from the early periods of ecclesiastical history, it is of great value; indeed, the only testimony worthy of being received as evidence of the condition of the Christian church at that time. Only let us have the conviction that what we have is genuine, that it is really the product of that first age, and then who will not give it a prominent place, as the most important testimony, beyond all comparison, in reference to the practices of those times?

A great mistake has been committed by some in respect to this matter—a mistake, the effect of which is to vitiate the evidence which really exists in reference to primitive periods, by confounding the testimonies spread over many of the early centuries, as if they were all equally trustworthy. How often has Eusebius, for instance, been quoted, although he wrote in the fourth century, as a witness of what took place in the first and second centuries, while Clement and Polycarp, who were contemporaneous witnesses, have been passed by with neglect, if not contempt. Other instances of a similar nature might be adduced; but this is sufficient to show the kind of error which we are anxious to avoid. If anything certain is to be ascertained respecting the gradual changes through which the nominal church of Christ has passed in

\* Remarks on the State of the Church of the First Centuries. Dedicated to Dr. Cave, pp. 2, 3. London, 1680.



successive centuries, from the apostolic period to the present, more care must be taken than has often been exhibited, to adhere to contemporaneous testimony in respect to all matters of fact. Even in respect to the first three centuries ; to combine the testimonies of Clement and Tertullian, or of Polycarp and Origen, is a great mistake. Why should not the rules of common sense be followed in these, as in all other matters !

What opinion should we form of a modern judge, who refused to receive or slightly passed over the testimony of some old men, whether few or many, in reference to an event which occurred forty years ago, although they were conversant with that event, and delivered their testimony independently of one another ; while he willingly received the testimony of younger men, who could not have been conversant with the event, on the sole ground of their having heard certain traditionary tales respecting it ? In every rightly constituted law court, a first witness has the first place in all questions of fact ; and when only a few eye-witnesses are found to agree in their testimony, yet without suspicion of collusion, their testimony is sufficient to overrule that of hundreds who are mere reporters of traditions, and secondary channels of evidence.

We propose then to place before the reader the testimony of those who lived and wrote in the first age after the apostles, that it may be seen how, for a long time, the apostolic institutions retained their hold upon the churches of Christ. We shall follow the order of time, placing the earliest witnesses first, and leaving those who come after to take their proper place. We shall not allow Tertullian, who wrote in

the second century, nor Eusebius, who wrote in the fourth, to come into court in order to tell us what was the condition of the church in the first; but we shall call up those who lived in the first century, that they may speak for themselves, as to the institutions and customs of their times.

It would occupy too much space to state all the reasons which have influenced modern critics in determining upon the authors whose writings have been received as genuine.\* Suffice it to say that the only writers of the first age whose compositions have descended to us in whole or in part, in such a state as to be relied on, are Clement, Polycarp, and Justin Martyr. To these some have added Ignatius, who in point of time comes between Clement and Polycarp. We shall add his name, therefore, to the list; but only for the purpose of showing (in the proper place) that the epistles which have been received as his, are unworthy of being admitted by any one who would separate the genuine from the false.

The earliest witness for the Independency of the first post-apostolic period is CLEMENT OF ROME. Very little is known respecting him, excepting what may be gathered from his own writings. While some suppose him to be the Clement mentioned by the apostle Paul as one of his "fellow-labourers," in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Philippians: others either

\* Du Pin's *Hist. of Ecc. Writers*, Jones, fol. 1696, contains a full account of the early writers, genuine, spurious, and lost. Also, Riddle's *Christian Antiquities*, but more brief. Gieseler's *Compendium of Ecc. Hist.* in Clarke's *Theol. Lib.* is very discriminating. But the best for the general reader is Dr. Bennett's *Theology of the Early Christian Church*, lect. i.

doubt or deny the fact.\* All, however, are agreed in giving him a place in the very highest antiquity, as the first Christian writer after the time of the apostles.† It is probable that he died somewhere about or before A.D. 100. He was therefore the contemporary of the apostles, or some of them; of Ignatius, of Apollonius of Tyana, the great champion of heathenism; of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny—authors whose classic writings have descended to our times.

His official relation to the church of Christ at Rome is a matter of dispute. Whether he was the sole minister of that church, or only one out of many—whether he was appointed to his office by Peter or by others—whether he outlived his fellow ministers, presbyters or bishops, and became sole minister or not—are matters which cannot with certainty be determined. His own writings say nothing on these subjects; and the testimony which has been given comes from periods too low down in the stream of time, and too much interested in a certain class of church opinions, to be received without hesitation. While some have called him the first bishop of Rome, and others have unhesitatingly placed his name on the list of the popes as the first pope of Rome, it is quite a

\* Hieronymus, Origen, Eusebius, Epiphanius, affirm this identity, Riddle's *Christian Antiquities*, p. 4. Neander says, "perhaps" he was the same. A writer in the *British Quarterly* for Nov. 1846, maintains the contrary opinion with some strong arguments.

† Neander's *Hist. of the Christ. Religion*, &c, Rose, vol. ii. p. 328, &c. Gieseler's *Eccl. Hist.* Davidson, vol. i. p. 3. Hagenbach's *History of Doctrines*, Buch, vol. i. p. 53. Riddle's *Christian Antiquities*, p. 3. Bennett's *Theol. of the early Christian Church*, p. 10. The last writer places the *Epistle to Diognetus* first, but without discovering the name of the author.

matter of uncertainty whether he was ever the sole minister of that church. The advocates of papal supremacy succeed no better with the case of Clement than do the advocates of the dogma of apostolical succession. It is still a matter of dispute whether Peter ever was at Rome or not. If not, how futile all the attempts which have been made to trace the succession of mere ministers in Christ's church up to him! But supposing that Peter did actually preside over the Romish see,\* and appoint his episcopal successors, the actual order of succession is still a matter of controversy. According to some, Linus succeeded Peter, and Clement Linus; according to others, Linus succeeded Peter, Anacletus Linus, and Clement Anacletus;† while, according to others, Clement succeeded Peter as the first link in that mysterious chain which keeps up the connection between modern episcopacy and that of primitive times. Bingham, the great referee of modern churchmen, endeavours to make little of this trifling variation. " 'Tis true," he says, "there is a little difference in the account which these authors give of the succession; for some reckon Linus first, then Anacletus, then Clemens; others begin with Clemens, and reckon him first in order from St. Peter. But this is easily reconciled by learned men, who make it appear that Linus died while St. Peter lived, and that Clemens was ordained their successor by St. Peter also. We have two or three persons, by this account, ordained successively bishops of Rome by the

\* Shade of Clement! how would thine ears have tingled to hear thy humble pastoral charge spoken of as a see!

† Irenæus, Adv. Heres. iii. 3. Eusebius, Ecc. Hist. iii. 15. Irenæus mentions all three. Eusebius omits Linus; but mentions the order of Clement as after Anacletus.

hands of the apostles."\* The ingenuity of learned men is indisputable, especially when they have a theory to support. Sometimes, however, it overreaches itself, as in the present case. What! Peter *living*, and yet to have one, two, three successors! Incredible! Peter, the first bishop, to appoint in succession three co-bishops—three rival bishops! Do the advocates of succession, and of episcopal rights as founded upon it, admit that St. Peter, though the first, was not the sole bishop of Rome?—that Linus was co-pastor, then Anacletus, then Clement? It is time that the doctrine of succession was given up when it takes this shape.

Our readers, probably, will deem the explanation of Neander much more honest than that of Bingham, even although it savour less of ingenuity. According to this writer, the contradictory accounts respecting the names and succession of the early pastors of the church of Rome, are a proof that the age of innovation had not arrived in Clement's day—that episcopal supremacy and apostolical succession were then unknown things. "The confusion," he writes, "which exists in regard to the succession of the first bishops of Rome, may perhaps also be attributed to this cause, that originally these names (that is, the names *presbyter* and *bishop*) were not so distinguished, and, therefore, many might bear at the same time the names of

\* Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, book ii. ch. i. p. 19, fol. 1726. In chap. xiii. p. 54, this author perplexes the question yet more by the admission that in the first age there were frequently two independent bishops in the same city, and in some cases coadjutors also, or co-pastors. He admits that Austin was the first who acted on the principle that two bishops might not be in one church at the same time; and that he acted on this principle because of his strict interpretation of the Nicene canon.

bishops or presbyters." \* Well may a modern writer exclaim, "What does *such* a succession prove? If the first link in the chain be wanting which connects it with truly apostolic authority, no evidence of future transmission or continuity can give it the character of apostolicity. It may be regular and uniform, and, from a certain point, uninterrupted; but, like the chain that connects some mighty mechanism of modern construction across the mouth of a river, binding coast to coast, and sustaining all the pressure of intercourse and traffic; if *that* link be wanting which unites it on either side with the solid rock, the massive character of the structure can afford no compensation for the defect, and the first trial betrays the vanity and pretension of the entire fabric. In the judgment of all candid minds, this apostolic chain must appear to be too disconnected at almost every point to be worthy of the name by which it has been designated, and assuredly too weak to bear the burden of ecclesiastical assumption and domination which it has been fabricated to sustain." †

But we have advanced enough, and more than enough, on this point. It is evident that nothing more can be ascertained respecting Clement than that he sustained a ministerial or pastoral relation to the early church at Rome; whether alone, or in conjunction with others, cannot now be affirmed with any degree of certainty, and is of no great importance. It is a matter of much greater moment to select his genuine writings from those which have, at various

\* Neander's Hist. of the Christ. Relig. &c. vol. i. p. 195, note. See also Riddle's Christian Antiquities, p. 4.

† Lectures on Puseyism, Fletcher's Select Works, vol. ii. p. 479, 480.

times, passed under his name, and thereby done injury to the cause of truth. Happily this task has already been accomplished for us. With scarcely any exception, all critics are now agreed in rejecting every thing that has been connected with his name, excepting his *Epistle to the Corinthians*.\* This epistle was read aloud, during the first centuries, at Divine service in many of the churches, and was held in high esteem. The occasion of its being written, and the statements which are made in its contents, all corroborate the views we have expressed respecting the independency of the churches of Christ in that early period. It appears that a disturbance had arisen in the bosom of the Corinthian church, from what precise cause is not known. In connexion, however, with that disturbance, some of the pastors had either been deposed from their office, or such a measure had been seriously contemplated. In these circumstances the Corinthian church sends a deputation to Rome, with a letter to the church there, asking for such advice as might be given. Here we pause for a moment to observe that the very occasion and manner of this application from the church at Corinth to the church at Rome is a proof, in part, of the independent character, internally and externally, of the churches of that day. The church at Corinth evidently preserved the principle of congregational Independency internally, since it deposed its own officers, or proposed to do so. It also preserved the same principle externally, since it asked for *advice* only from the church at Rome, and was not interfered with by any ecclesiastical power from with-

\* Neander's Hist. of the Christ. Relig. &c. vol. ii. pp. 332, 333.  
Bennett's Theology of the Early Christian Church, lect. i. &c. &c.

out. The circumstance of the church of Corinth sending so far as Rome, and then for advice only, shows clearly enough that it was subject to no diocesan supervision on the one hand, and to no synodical regulations or superintendence on the other.

But the contents of this epistle are more decisive than the circumstances which gave occasion to it. We have spoken of it as the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians; and, probably, it was written by him. But, strictly speaking, it is a letter from the church of which Clement was a minister. It commences thus—"The church of God which sojourns at Rome, to the church of God which sojourns at Corinth."\* The name of Clement does not appear at all. What an evidence this of the total absence of all clerical distinctions! What a contrast to modern episcopal assumptions of precedence! What a negation of all papistical pretensions to official pre-eminence in an universal vicarage of Christ! Is Clement of Rome, indeed and of a truth, the first bishop of Rome, and successor of St. Peter? Is he, indeed, pope Clement the first? Humble-minded man! would that his successors were as harmless as he! He does not even mention his own name! He hides himself in the shadow of the church of which he is the meek-hearted minister!

But let us inquire into the contents of the epistle, so far as they may illustrate our subject. It is possible that under cover of so humble an introduction much of hierarchical pretension may creep in unawares. This creeping on the ground and glazing of the tongue

\* *Ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ παροικοῦσα Ῥώμην, τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῇ παροικοῦσῃ Κόρινθον.*



may prove only a prelude, as such things often have proved in after times, to spiritual usurpation and fraud. But no! it is not so. The entire epistle is in the same spirit. It is all of a piece. It is human, and therefore imperfect. It contains some far-fetched illustrations, as might be expected from a writer not inspired. Its natural history respecting the phoenix is by no means in accordance with modern notions respecting that marvellous bird. One passage occurs—which some have suspected to be an interpolation—respecting the Levitical priesthood. But still, on the whole, it is a genuine document, and any thing but such as a modern bishop of Rome would write to a church at Corinth.

Of course the reader need not be told, that there is nothing in the epistle which favours the idea of any thing opposed to *aggregate* Independency. In that day of changeful experience, when Christianity was an illicit religion, and Christians were scarcely tolerated as a sect every where spoken against, it was hardly possible for a bishop of Rome even to dream, much less speak, of state patronage and control. Though there were many churches, none of them (as far as this epistle indicates) thought of any secular alliance with the state in any country. They were quite content with being left alone, to conduct their affairs in their own way.

Neither is there in this epistle any thing opposed to the principle of *congregational* Independency, whether external or internal. We have a beautiful example of one Christian family giving advice to another Christian family, when that advice is solicited. The church at Corinth is in trouble, and asks for counsel from the church at Rome, which is cheerfully given—but no-

thing more. Nothing is hereby done whereby the *external* independency of the church at Corinth is violated. No arrangement is implied whereby the families of Christ may be supposed to be brought under one general superintendence and control. Although the church at Rome gives its advice to the church at Corinth, it is in such a spirit as to lead the most superficial reader to infer that each church considered itself upon an equal footing of friendship and love, and that neither sought to exercise domination or undue influence over the other. The troubles which had arisen at Corinth were only a reason for the exhibition of more meekness, sympathy, and brotherly love than usual, on the part of the church at Rome. There is no dogmatism, no threatening, no anathema, in the primitive epistle. All is gentleness and suavity, and the word of God is paramount in all its representations of duty. Such, at least, is our interpretation of the spirit of the epistle.

In respect to the *internal* independency of the congregational church much is advanced. A lovely picture is drawn of the peace and charity which once prevailed amongst the Corinthians, as the result of genuine religious principles pervading all the members. "Ye were all humble-minded, nothing boasting, more willing to be subject than to rule, more pleased to give than to receive. Content with the Divine provisions, and carefully attending His words, ye were enlarged in your sympathies, and His sufferings were before your eyes. Thus a profound and blessed peace was given to all; and an insatiable desire of doing good, and an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit, was upon all. And being full of holy designs, with great earnestness and pious confidence ye stretched

forth your hands to God Almighty, supplicating him to be propitious, if so be in any thing ye had sinned involuntarily. It was your labour night and day on behalf of all the brotherhood, that the number of his elect might be saved, with compassion (on the part of God) and meetness of mind (on theirs). Ye were sincere, and harmless, and forgiving towards one another. All sedition and all schism was an abomination to you. You grieved over the sins of your neighbour, you esteemed their defects as your own. Ye were without grudging in all your beneficence, and ready to every good work. Adorned with a thoroughly virtuous and religious demeanour, ye did all things in the fear of Him; and the statutes and precepts of the Lord were written on the tablets of your hearts."\* Afterwards, when through pride and a spirit of contention this community became divided and the scene of peace reversed, nothing is said which indicates that matters may be brought to their original state, by any thing but the spirit of the gospel again pervading all the members of the Corinthian church. No threat is held out that the hand of external or internal power shall compel them to reduce things to a state of order and harmony. No counsel is given to refer their disputes to a synodical court or the decisions of a diocesan bishop. The advice of the church at Rome implies that the Corinthians themselves must commence and effect the desired change. And such is the charity and humility of the church at Rome, that it places itself side by side with the church at Corinth, not merely sympathising with it, but speaking as gently as if it thought that the exhortations

and counsels which are needed by the one were needed by the other also. "Let *us* therefore humble ourselves," is the kind of language employed, "and let *us* do as it is written."\* "Let *us*, therefore, hold fast to those who follow peace."† "Let therefore *our* whole body be saved in Christ Jesus, and let each one be subject to his neighbour, according as he is placed by the grace of God. Let not him that is strong despise the weak; and let the weak honour the strong. Let the rich give to the poor; and let the poor thank God that he has given to him by whom his own wants may be supplied. Let the wise man manifest his wisdom, not in words but in good works. Let not the humble bear witness for himself, but let him leave it for another to bear witness respecting him, etc."‡ "In whatever things, therefore, *we* have transgressed, let us ask forgiveness."§ "God is not wanting in anything, brethren, and he requires nothing of any one, but to confess to him. For David, his chosen one, says, etc."||

These are specimens of the manner of the epistle throughout, in all its exhortations. But more important matters are disclosed in some passages which prove that in that early period there were only two orders of officers in the church of Christ; that these were chosen by the people, and were thus strictly congregational; and that their continuance in office depended upon their character and demeanour. All these points, so essential to the internal Independency of the congregation or church, we now proceed to illustrate from the epistle itself.

\* Sect. xiii.

† Sect. xv.

‡ Sect. xxxviii.

§ Sect. li.

|| Sect. lii.

First, in reference to the point that there were only two orders of officers in the churches of that age, and that these were bishops or presbyters, and deacons. "The apostles brought the gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ from God. Christ, therefore, was sent from God, and the apostles from Christ. Both these were done fittingly according to the will of God. Wherefore, receiving the commandments, and being fully confirmed by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and having faith through the word of God, filled with the Holy Ghost they went forth announcing that the kingdom of God was at hand. Preaching, therefore, through the country regions and the cities, they appointed their first fruits, having tried them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those that should believe. And this not as something new; since a long time before it had been written concerning bishops and deacons. For thus, somewhere, the Scripture says, 'I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith.' " \* In this passage, bishops and deacons are mentioned as the officers of the church. No third order is re-

\* Οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἡμῖν εὐηγγελίσθησαν ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστὸς ἀπο τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἐξεπέμφθη ὁ Χριστὸς οὖν ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένοντο οὖν ἀμφότερα εὐτάκτως ἐκ θελήματος Θεοῦ. Παραγγελίας οὖν λαβόντες, καὶ πληροφορηθέντες διὰ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ πιστωθέντες ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ, μετὰ πληροφορίας Πνεύματος Ἁγίου, ἐξῆλθον εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ μέλλειν ἔρχεσθαι. Κατὰ χώρας οὖν καὶ πόλεις κηρύσσοντες, καθίστανον τὰς ἀρχὰς αὐτῶν, δοκιμάσαντες τῷ Πνεύματι, εἰς ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους τῶν μελλόντων πιστεῦειν. Καὶ τοῦτο οὐ καινῶς ἐκ γὰρ δὴ πολλῶν χρόνων ἐγγράπτο περὶ ἐπισκόπων καὶ διακόνων οὕτως γὰρ πού λέγει ἡ γραφή; "Καταστήσω τοὺς ἐπισκόπους αὐτῶν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ, καὶ τοὺς διακόνους αὐτῶν ἐν πίστει."—Sect. xlii. *Patres Apostolici*. Jacobson, vol i. p. 147—150.

ferred to. On the contrary, by the quotation with which the passage concludes (whether an apt quotation or not, no matter), we infer that in the mind of Clement, or rather in the opinion of the church in whose name he wrote, the two offices of bishops and deacons were a matter of Divine institution and pre-appointment. If it be asked whether mention is not made of presbyters in any part of the epistle, the answer is, certainly; but in such a manner as to show that in the mind of Clement, presbyters and bishops were one and the same. In the following passage, which succeeds almost immediately the one just quoted, he uses the two names in this manner. "Our apostles also knew, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be contention respecting the name of the bishop's office. And so for this purpose, having obtained a perfect fore-knowledge, they appointed [nominated] those we have just mentioned, and afterwards gave direction that when those persons died, other proved men should succeed to their service. Those, therefore, who were appointed [nominated] by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the approval of the whole church, and who have served the flock of Christ unblameably, with humility, peaceably and not illiberally, and well reported of all for many years,—such persons we think cannot in justice be cast out of office. For it is with us no small sin, if we cast from the office of bishop those who have unblameably and holily used their gifts. Blessed are the presbyters who, having finished their course, have obtained a fruitful and perfect dismissal; for they have no fear lest any one should depose them from their appointed place. For we see how you have dis-

placed some who conducted themselves well, from their irreproachable and honoured post of service.”\*

It is evident from this passage, and from others in which a similar reference is made, that bishops and presbyters were only two names of one and the same office. It is further evident from the reference which is made to the church's part in the choice of officers, that the power of election was in the body of the congregation, while the proposal or nomination of certain persons as candidates for office might come from certain eminent individuals;† just as in our modern election of members of parliament, some eminent person or persons nominate, while the people elect by their suffrages. It is also further evident from the very admissions respecting the character and demean-

\* Καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἡμῶν ἔγνωσαν διὰ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅτι ἔρις ἔσται ἐπὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς. Διὰ ταύτην οὖν τὴν αἰτίαν πρόγνωσιν εὐλόγητες τελείαν, κατέστησαν τοὺς προειρημένους, καὶ μεταξύ ἐπινομήν δεδοκασιν, ὅπως εἰς κοιμηθῶσιν, διαδέξωνται ἕτεροι δεδοκιμασμένοι ἄνδρες τὴν λειτουργίαν αὐτῶν. Τοὺς οὖν κατασταθέντας ὑπ' ἐκείνων, ἡ μεταξύ ὑφ' ἑτέρων ἐλλογίμων ἀνδρῶν, συνευδοκησάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας πάσης, καὶ λειτουργήσαντας ἀμέμπτως τῷ πομίνῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ ταπεινοφροσύνης, ἡσυχῆς καὶ ἀβαναύσως, μεμαρτυρημένους τε πολλοὺς χρόνους ὑπὸ πάντων, τοὺτους οὐ δικαίως νομίζομεν ἀποβαλέσθαι τῆς λειτουργίας. Ἀμαρτία γὰρ οὐ μικρὰ ἡμῖν ἔσται, εἰς τοὺς ἀμέμπτως καὶ ὁσίως προσενηκόντας τὰ δῶρα, τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς ἀποβάλλωμεν. Μακάριοι οἱ προοδοιπορήσαντες πρεσβύτεροι, οἵτινες ἔγκαρπον καὶ τελείαν ἔσχον τὴν ἀνάλυσιν· οὐ γὰρ εὐλαβοῦνται μή τις αὐτοὺς μεταστήσῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱδρυμένου αὐταῖς τόπου. Ὅραμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἐνίοις ὑμεῖς μεταγάγετε καλῶς πολιτευομένους, ἐκ τῆς ἀμέμπτως αὐτοῖς τετιμημένης λειτουργίας.—Sect. xlv. Patres Apostolici, Jacobson, vol. i. p. 154—160.

† Even in Cyprian's time this was the method. Ep. 52. The bishop was chosen by nomination or testimony of the clergy (*de clericorum testimonis*), but by the suffrages of the people (*de plebis suffragio*).

nour of such officers as may not be cast out of office, that the people had the *power* of casting them out without justifiable cause even, and much more when there was good reason for it. It is scarcely needful to add, that the whole tenor of the epistle shows that there was no idea in that day of a bishop whose office was not confined exclusively to one congregation or church: namely, that in which he was chosen to serve, and to whom he was amenable for his conduct.

Such is the testimony of the first witness whose writings have descended to our times! Can anything be more decisive as to the practice of the churches in the earliest times? Can anything be more express as to the Independency of the churches of Christ in the very first period succeeding that in which the apostles lived and laboured? The stream still runs pure and uncorrupted, as at its source. The platform of the church's constitution still remains, as it had been erected by those infallible master-builders, the inspired apostles!

The next witness in the order of time would be **IGNATIUS**, if any confidence could be placed in the epistles which have been circulated in his name. Such, however, are the universal admissions respecting the interpolated character of these epistles, and the results of more recent discoveries respecting them, that the only certain way of proceeding, if we would ascertain the truth, is to reject them from the evidence altogether. What court of law would listen to witnesses who have been manifestly tampered with, when honest witnesses are at hand? As, however, much stress has been laid by some upon the contents of these writings, we shall lay before our readers as clear a statement as we are able to furnish of the



reasons which induce us to reject them in reference to our present subject.

Respecting Ignatius himself, there has been the same difference of opinion, as to the order of his coming to the office of bishop of Antioch, that we noticed in reference to Clement of Rome. Some reckon him first, some second, some third bishop of the church in that place; and although Bingham,\* as usual, attempts to reconcile the discrepant testimonies, we think it only another evidence of a plurality of bishops in the churches of those days.† All that

\* Bingham, book ii. chap. ii. "If we pass to Antioch, then we find Euodius first, and after him Ignatius, ordained bishops by the hands of the apostles. Baronius and some others fancy that they sat both at the same time; the one as bishop of the Jews, and the other of the Gentiles: but Eusebius says expressly that Euodius was the first and Ignatius the second, after Euodius was dead; and it is agreed by all ancient writers that they were both consecrated before St. Peter's death. Of Euodius there can be no question made, if it appear that Ignatius was ordained in his room. Now this is most expressly said by Theodoret, that he received the gift of the high-priesthood (!) ἀρχιεπισκόπου χάριν, from the hand of the great St. Peter. In like manner, Chrysostom in his encomium upon him says, he does not only admire him, because he was thought worthy of so high a degree; but that he was ordained to it by those holy men, and had the hand of the blessed apostles laid upon his sacred head. The same is said in effect by Athanasius, when he calls him the first bishop of Antioch after the apostles; and Origen, who calls him the second after St. Peter, and Jerom the third: *for though they count differently, yet they mean the same thing*; that Ignatius was ordained successor to Euodius while the apostles lived, and so might be called either second or third after the apostles, *according as St. Peter and Euodius were included or excluded out of the number.*"

† Clarkson's Select Works, p. 118. "Ecclesiastical writers do so contradict one another as renders their testimonies of little value. . . . Some modern authors of great eminency, both Protestants

we can know with certainty respecting Ignatius is, that he was one of the ministers of the church at Antioch \* in a very early period of the post-apostolic age, and that he died somewhere about the year A.D. 116,† a martyr to the Christian faith. "In the time of the Emperor Trajan," says Neander, in his cautious manner, "it would appear that he was carried as prisoner to Rome, where he expected to be exposed to wild beasts. On the journey, it would seem he wrote seven epistles; six to the churches of Asia Minor, and one to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. Certainly, these epistles contain passages which at least bear completely upon them the character of antiquity. This is particularly the case with the passages directed against Judaism and Docetism; but even the shorter and more trustworthy edition is *very much interpolated*."‡

Such is the testimony of Neander some time back. Since then a Syriac version of three of the epistles of Ignatius has been brought to light,§ which confirms

and Papists (not only Baronius, but Dr. Hammond), find no more tolerable way to reconcile them, than by asserting that there were more bishops than one there at once, which quite blasts the conceit of a diocesan church there."

\* Biblical Review, Jan. 1846, p. 17.

† Bennett's Theology of the Early Christian Church, p. 18, mentions nearly all the different dates which have been fixed upon.

‡ Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c., vol. ii. p. 334.

§ Biblical Review, Jan. 1846, p. 22. "In the years 1838 and 1839, the Rev. Henry Tattam procured from the same monastery in the desert of Nitria, which Huntington had visited in the seventeenth century, some very ancient Syriac manuscripts, which were brought to England and deposited in the British Museum. They were immediately examined with anxious care by Mr. Cureton, of the museum, to ascertain if any of the epistles of Ignatius were among them; and the result of his examination was the discovery, not only of several extracts from these epistles, cited by ecclesiastical

the opinion of the most eminent critics respecting the character of those Greek editions (one a shorter and the other a longer form), which have hitherto been in circulation. Many have been the disputes, and fierce the contests of partizans and critics from the time of the Reformation downwards, respecting these Greek editions, their comparative value, and their actual worth as faithful transmissions from the earliest ages of ecclesiastical history; and now this Syriac version comes to light to confirm the opinion generally entertained respecting the untrustworthy character of both. The following statement from an able pen will set the merits of the case in a clear light, and in as few words as are needful, in a matter respecting which so much confusion and controversy have arisen.

“Let us glance again at the literary history of the

writers, but also of the entire Epistle to Polycarp. Having obtained a grant of money from the Treasury for the purpose, the trustees of the British Museum engaged Mr. Tattam to pay another visit to the monastery of the desert of Nitria, in order to obtain the remainder of its valuable collection of Syriac manuscripts. These manuscripts arrived safely in the British Museum in the spring of 1843, and among them were found three entire Epistles of Ignatius,—to St. Polycarp, to the Ephesians, and to the Romans. These epistles have been recently published in the Syriac with an English translation by Mr. Cureton, who has also prefixed a valuable introduction respecting the literary history of the epistles, to which we are indebted for some of the preceding remarks. His work is entitled, ‘The Ancient Syriac Version of the Epistles of St. Ignatius—to St. Polycarp, to the Ephesians, and the Romans; together with extracts from his Epistles, collected from the writings of Severus of Antioch, Timotheus of Alexandria, and others: edited with an English translation and notes; also the Greek text of these three Epistles, corrected according to the *authority of the Syriac version.*’”

epistles. First was published the longer Greek text, which contained such manifest interpolations, that Calvin—no mean judge in matters of criticism—declared that nothing could be more silly than the stuff which had been brought out under the name of Ignatius. More than a century afterwards appeared the shorter Greek text, omitting most of the passages of the longer text, which bore the strongest marks of the fabrication of a later age, but still retaining much which has been judged spurious by some of the best critics of modern times. Last of all, we have a third recension of the text, in the Syriac version now before us, again omitting most of the passages that were judged spurious in the shorter Greek text, but likewise in its turn retaining some of them. Why, then, should this last recension be regarded as immaculate? Why should not the same principles of criticism be applied to this Syriac version as were applied, first to the longer Greek text, and subsequently to the shorter? We see no reason why a distinction should be drawn between them, and why the Syriac recension should receive the favour which was denied to the two others. The fact that the quotations made by Irenæus and Eusebius from the epistles of Ignatius, are found in the Syriac version, is no proof that the Syriac recension is the same as the one used by those writers; these quotations are far too few to enable us to judge of the nature and form of the epistles which were used by Irenæus and Eusebius. Having, then, no external testimony to determine the dispute, we are again thrown back upon the epistles themselves, and we there find passages which it seems to us almost certain that Ignatius could never have written. We confine ourselves to two striking instances.

“The first example which we take is the passage from the epistle to Polycarp, which has been already given and of which the Syriac version is as follows: ‘Look to the bishop, that God may also look upon you. I will be instead of the souls of those who are subject to the bishops and the presbyters and deacons; with them may I have a portion with God.’—The Syriac Version, pp. 8, 9.

“Independently of all other considerations, which will at once occur to our readers, we may just mention two *facts*, which render it very probable that this passage is an interpolation; first, it is the only place in which all the three orders of the clergy are mentioned; and secondly, it occurs in the midst of a personal address to a single individual, Polycarp, and it is, therefore, most strange for the writer all at once to break off the address to the person to whom he is writing, and to exclaim, ‘Look to the bishop, that God also may look to you.’

“In the epistle to the Ephesians, the writer makes a slip which indubitably betrays the interpolator:—‘I rejoice in you, and I offer supplication on account of you, Ephesians, *a church which is renowned in all ages!*’—p. 13.

“Surely, Ignatius, who was put to death, at the latest calculation, in A.D. 116, could not have spoken in this way of a church which had not existed more than sixty or seventy years; but one can easily understand why a later writer should have bestowed such praise upon a church, the bishop of which was the metropolitan of all the churches in the province of Asia, and enjoyed the rights and privileges of a patriarch; naturally, therefore, would a later writer speak of the church of Ephesus as one renowned in all ages. It is

by incidental remarks of this kind that we are almost always able to detect the interpolator. It would be easy to bring forward other passages which we regard to be interpolations, but we think that these are sufficient to prove the object we have in view; which is merely to show that these Syriac epistles cannot be regarded as a faithful representation of what Ignatius wrote.

“ Our opinion upon the whole controversy is briefly this. It appears certain, from the testimony of Polycarp, who must have known the fact, that Ignatius wrote some letters while on his journey from Antioch to Rome to suffer martyrdom. These letters, however, must naturally have been very brief, from the circumstances in which the martyr was placed, since he was strictly guarded by Roman soldiers, of whose cruelty he complains bitterly in his epistle to the Romans, and who, therefore, would not have been likely to allow him much time for the composition of letters. In the fierce persecutions to which the church at Antioch was afterwards so often exposed, these epistles of the great martyr would naturally have been secreted by the bishop or some of the presbyters, that they might not fall into the hands of the heathen; and, as we see from the number of apocryphal Christian writings that have come down to us, that it early became the practice to forge works and attribute them to some early saint or martyr, it is not surprising that those who had the custody of the Ignatian epistles should have been anxious to obtain the authority of the early bishop of their church on points of Christian discipline and doctrine, which he had neglected to mention. We believe that they therefore foisted into his epistles passages bearing upon these points; and

it likewise appears to us very probable that they added others which had no direct bearing upon any controverted point, merely for the purpose of lengthening the epistles, and thus giving to the church more of the sentiments and opinions of the holy martyr. We therefore think that the three different recensions of the epistles contain a *ground-work*, which was really written by Ignatius, and that to this various passages were added from time to time, probably some at a very early, and some, certainly, at a very late period. We do not pretend to determine or even to conjecture the times at which these various additions were made, but we believe that the Syriac version exhibits the text at a period when comparatively few interpolations had been made; that the shorter Greek text belongs to a later age, when more numerous interpolations had crept in; and that the longer Greek text represents a still more recent time, and exhibits a still greater number of all kinds of interpolations.”\*

On the grounds contained in the preceding statement, we think we are abundantly justified in rejecting the so-called epistles of Ignatius as unworthy to be trusted in respect to a point which requires unimpeachable evidence. In such an inquiry as the one we are pursuing in this chapter, only contemporary testimony should be taken. If then the writings of Ignatius have been so dealt with as to be a transcript of the minds of churchmen of the third and fourth centuries, rather than of the author whose name they bear; are we not bound in justice to pass them by as documents which cannot be received in evidence? As we proceed to other witnesses we shall

\* Biblical Review, for Feb. 1846, pp. 110—113. See also appendix B.

see the propriety of this course. Nothing can be more in harmony than the testimony of Clement and Polycarp, who, in point of time, came after Ignatius; whereas the style, and spirit, and sentiments, of the Ignatian epistles, in many passages at least, suit a much later period in the history of the church. The "pious frauds," as they have been termed, committed by aspiring churchmen, in periods of innovation on apostolic institutions, may have served for a season to perplex, if not to mislead the inquirer into the character of the church's constitution in the first age; like a stone cast upwards in the stream of time, they may have disturbed the purity of its early flow, and have given occasion to doubt and misgiving respecting the real course of things at that precise period: but the truth will come out at last, and when the source of disturbance is removed, and the stream once more resumes its own appropriate channel, it will be seen how calm and pure the current as we approach the fountain head!

We pass on then to the next witness, in point of time, **POLYCARP** of Smyrna. Little is known with certainty respecting his birth-place, parentage, early education, the time of his appointment, and the order of his succession to the pastoral office, in the ancient church of Smyrna. As we have observed in reference to Clement and Ignatius, so we may observe in reference to Polycarp, that the precise period and order of his accession to episcopal office cannot be well ascertained. It would seem, from the statements of some, that he had been a disciple and companion of the apostle John, whom in spirit he much resembled. Although he sustained office at Smyrna during the almost incredibly long period of seventy-four years,



little has been recorded respecting him on which any reliance may be placed, until we come to the closing period of his life. The account of his martyrdom, contained in an epistle written not long after his death, in the name of the church of Smyrna, is one of the most interesting statements to be found in the records of ecclesiastical antiquity. The entire document is too lengthy to be inserted here. The following particulars, however, may not be out of place.

In the seventh year of the reign of Marcus Antoninus, or A.D. 167, the storm of persecution, which had varied in its severity for some years, increased into a tempest at the time of the proposed expedition against the Marcomanni. To propitiate their deities the heathen Romans waged a fierce war against the Christians, and Smyrna was not exempt from the calamity. Many sealed their faith with their blood. The cry was heard a short season after the storm began: 'Let Polycarp be sought for!' The venerable man was too high and holy a professor of the Christian faith not to be singled out as a victim. He did not court martyrdom, however, but prudently acting upon the advice of his friends, avoided his persecutors so long as he could do so in an honourable way. He sought refuge first in one and then in another village, in the neighbourhood of Smyrna, in the latter of which he permitted himself to be seized. He even came down from the upper story of the house where he was secreted, as soon as he heard that the officers had come to apprehend him, saying, 'God's will be done.' He invited them to partake of his hospitality, and begged as the only favour, an undisturbed hour for prayer. The fulness of his heart carried him on in his *devotions* more than twice that time; and even the heathen

were touched by his sincerity and fervour. He was then conducted into Smyrna, where the chief officer of police and another met him, invited him into their chariot, and sought in an apparently kind manner to undermine his constancy, saying, 'What harm can it be for you to say, *Our Lord the Emperor*, and to offer up sacrifices?' Polycarp at first was silent; but when pressed yet further, calmly replied, 'I will not do as you advise me.' On this they grew angry, used many contemptuous expressions towards him, threw him out of the chariot, and severely injured him. Not resenting their conduct, he hastened on under the conduct of his guards, as if nothing had happened. When he appeared before the pro-consul, the latter asked him to recant, 'Regard,' he said, 'thy great age; swear by the genius of Cæsar, say, *take away the impious*; curse Christ, and I will set you free.' The old man replied, 'Eighty and six years have I served Him, and have received only good at His hands, how can I now blaspheme Him, my King, and my Saviour?' He was still pressed, and still was firm; 'I am a Christian,' said he, 'If you desire to know what Christianity is, appoint an hour and hear me.' 'Only persuade the people,' said the pro-consul, 'and you are safe.' But Polycarp would not condescend to render an account to any but the powers ordained by God. In vain did the pro-consul threaten him with death by the wild beasts, and by the funeral pile. Polycarp was firm. He was publicly announced by the herald as one who had *confessed himself a Christian*. The tumultuous mob demanded that he should be sacrificed; they eagerly collected the wood for the pile, seized the victim, and were about to bind him to it; 'Leave me, I pray, unfastened,' said the

courageous martyr, 'He who has enabled me to endure the fire will give me strength also to remain firm at the stake.' And there, bound, before his spirit rose aloft through the flames, he uttered his last prayer: 'O Lord! Almighty God! the Father of thy beloved son, Jesus Christ, through whom we have received a knowledge of Thee! God of the angels, and of the whole creation, of the whole human race, and of the saints, who live before thy presence! I thank thee that thou hast thought me worthy, this day and this hour, to share the cup of thy Christ among the number of thy witnesses.' To conclude in the words of the epistle referred to—"Such are the events which relate to the blessed Polycarp, who though the twelfth of those who, together with those of Philadelphia, suffered martyrdom, is alone remembered of all men, so as to be spoken of by the very Gentiles themselves, in every place, not only as an eminent teacher, but also as a glorious martyr; whose dying testimony all desire to imitate, as having been every way conformable to the gospel of Christ. For having by patience overcome the unjust governor, and so received the crown of immortality, he now, together with the apostles, and all other righteous men who have gone before, with great triumph glorifies God, even the Father, and blesses our Lord, the Saviour of our souls, and governor of our bodies, and shepherd of the whole church which is in all the earth."\*

It is related by Irenæus,† who was a disciple of Polycarp, that this venerable man wrote many epis-

\* Της Σμυρναίων Εκκλησίας περι μαρτυριον του αγιου Πολυκαρπου.—  
Sect. 19.

† Apud Euseb. Hist. Eccles. v. 20.

ties in the course of his ministry, both to private individuals and churches. But all of these have been lost, with the exception of one to the Philippians. The mere names of some, and fragments of others have been preserved, but nothing more.\* So that this one epistle is all that we can reckon upon as certainly his; and this is not entire. Some, indeed, have endeavoured to impugn the genuineness even of this, or at least of certain portions of it, but without success. In the present day it is almost universally received as an authentic memorial of the first age of ecclesiastical history. It is probable that the epistle in question was composed soon after the death of Ignatius, or somewhere about the year A.D. 117; and when we remember the intimacy which existed between Ignatius and Polycarp, it affords another proof that the epistles which have been circulated in the name of Ignatius are not his, but the forgeries of later times. For in this epistle there are no sentiments similar to those contained in the Ignatian epistles, in reference to the distinction between presbyters and bishops, and the pre-eminence of the church's rulers. The whole epistle, on the contrary, breathes the same spirit as that of Clement to the Corinthians, and contains nothing opposed to the Independent constitution of the churches of Christ in that day. We proceed to adduce examples in confirmation of these opinions.

In the first place, the superscription of the epistle contains no pretensions to episcopal pre-eminence on the part of Polycarp. He speaks of himself as one of the presbyters or elders of the church at Smyrna, and nothing more. "Polycarp and his fellow presbyters

\* Wake's Genuine Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers, p. 123.

(or, and those who with him are presbyters),\* to the church of God which sojourns at Philippi; mercy to you and peace from God omnipotent and the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, be multiplied." What can be more simple and unostentatious than this? If Polycarp had been the kind of bishop which some have supposed, we should no doubt have found him writing in another style, and every reader of his epistles would have known that there was at least some distinction between a bishop and his presbyters.

In the next place, we find no allusion to the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons in any portion of this primitive letter. On the contrary, every reference to officers shows that they formed in that day two classes, and two only. In section five, for example, after mentioning some evils which the Philippians as Christians were to avoid, he adds—"Wherefore it is necessary to abstain from all these things, being subject to your presbyters and deacons, as unto God and Christ."† Whatever interpretation may be put upon the last clause (and it is probable that it only refers to the Divine sanction given to the official distinctions in the church), it is plain that there were at this time only two orders of officers in the church at Philippi; even as there were in the days of the apostle Paul, when he addressed his epistle to "the church at Philippi, with its bishops and deacons." When exhorting the Christians at Philippi to render that subjection to their officers which was due, he would not have omitted to mention their bishop, of all others, if there had

\* Πολυκάρπος καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ πρεσβύτεροι.

† Διὸ δεῖν ἀπεχεσθαι ἀπὸ πάντων τούτων, ὑποτασσόμενους τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις καὶ διακόνοις, ὡς Θεῷ καὶ Χριστῷ—*Patres Apostolici, Jacobson, vol. ii. p. 496.*

been such an officer in distinction from the presbyters. The next section (§ vi) confirms this position, and affords proof that the bishops and presbyters were one and the same person; since it speaks of presbyters as exercising the functions of the bishop. The following are Polycarp's words—"And let the presbyters be compassionate, merciful to all, converting them from their errors, visiting (looking after, as a bishop) all the sick, not forgetting the widows, the orphans, and the needy."\* These and other duties enjoined upon the presbyters are such as appertain to the bishop; and while they are all urged home on the presbyters, not a syllable is written respecting their being subject to a superior officer, bearing the exclusive name of bishop in the Philippian church. He does say respecting Christ—"Let us serve Him in fear and with all reverence;"† again placing himself on an equal footing with the presbyters; but he gives no hint anywhere respecting the duty of presbyters to their superiors, nor of bishops to their subordinates. This is all very singular, if, as some affirm, the episcopal office and functions were in those days distinct from those of the presbyters or elders.

But there is a third point, more important than either of the former, illustrated by this letter. This respects the power of the churches in that age to elect, depose, and restore to office again, their own ministers. The portion of the epistle in which this is found is not preserved in the Greek, but in the Latin translation;

\* Καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι δὲ εὐσπλαγχοὶ, εἰς πάντας ἐλεήμονες, ἐπιστρέφοντες τὰ ἀποπεπλανημένα, ἐπισκεπτόμενοι πάντας ἀσθενεῖς, μὴ ἀμελοῦντες χήρας, ἢ ὀρφανοῦ, ἢ πένητος.—*Patres Apostolici*, Jacobson, ii. 497, 498.

† Οὕτως οὖν δουλεύσωμεν αὐτῷ μετὰ φόβου καὶ πάσης ἐνλαβείας.—*ibid.* p. 498.

no doubt, however, is cast over it as a genuine transcript of the statements and sentiments contained in the original. It is certainly not such a passage as the interpolators of after times would think of forging in order to serve their high-church purposes. "I am greatly afflicted," says Polycarp, "for Valens, who was formerly made a presbyter amongst you, that he should so little understand the office which was given him. I admonish you, therefore, that ye abstain from covetousness, and that ye be chaste and truth-telling. Keep yourselves from all evil. But he that cannot govern himself in respect to these things, how can he pronounce this commandment to others? If a man does not keep himself from covetousness, he is not free from the charge of idolatry, and shall be judged as one of the heathen. But who are ignorant of the judgment of the Lord? *Do we not know that the saints shall judge the world*, as Paul teaches? But I have neither perceived nor heard anything of this kind in you, amongst whom the blessed Paul laboured, and who are named in the beginning of his epistle. For he glories in you amongst all the churches, which at that time were the only ones that knew God; for we did not then know him. Therefore, brethren, I am exceedingly sorry both for him and for his wife, to whom the Lord grant a true repentance. Therefore, be ye also moderate in this matter: and do not regard such as if they were enemies, but call them back as frail and erring members, that ye may save your whole body. By so doing you will edify your own selves."\*

\* *Nimis contristatus sum pro Valente, qui Presbyter factus est aliquando apud vos: quod sic ignoret is locum, qui datus est ei. Moneo itaque vos ut abstineatis ab avaritia, et sitis casti et veraces. Abstinete vos ab omni malo. Qui autem in his non potest se gu-*

Who can read this passage, and fail to perceive that the church at Philippi was a self-governed church? Valens had been a presbyter, but had been deposed from his office on account of some great delinquency; nay, more, had been excluded from the church, since both himself and his wife are placed in the same category as persons who might be called back again to fellowship after repentance. That the Philippian church had deposed and excluded Valens is evident, from the exhortation addressed to it respecting him; and that the Philippian church had the recognized power of restoring him to his former position is evident from the desire of Polycarp conveyed in express words. Nothing is said respecting the election of presbyters, in the first instance; but may it not be certainly inferred, that the church which had power to depose from office, and restore to office again, had also the power of making the original choice? Thus this portion of the Epistle to the Philippians confirms the views we have propounded in the former portion of our work, respecting the internal independency of the

bernare, quo modo alii [aliis?] pronunciat hoc? Si quis non abstinuerit se ab avaritia, ab idolotria coinquinabitur; et tanquam inter gentes judicabitur, qui autem ignorant judicium Domini? *An nescimus, quia sancti mundum judicabunt?* sicut Paulus docet. Ego autem nihil tale sensi in vobis, vel audivi, in quibus laboravi; beatus Paulus; qui estis in principio Epistolæ ejus. De vobis etenim gloriatur in omnibus Ecclesiis, quæ Deum solæ tunc cognoverant: nos autem nondum noveramus. Valde ergo, fratres, contristor pro illo et pro conjuge ejus: quibus det Dominus poenitentiam veram. Sobrii ergo estote et vos in hoc; et non sicut inimicos tales existimetis, sed sicut passibilia membra et errantia eos revoke; ut omnium vestrum corpus salvetis. Hoc enim agentes, vos ipsos ædificatis."—Patres Apostolici, Jacobson, vol. ii. pp. 506—8.



congregational church in the apostolic and primitive age. It is, moreover, equally apparent that every church at this time (if we may judge of all by one) was a complete society in itself, subject to no external authority in any shape whatever, and bound by no laws save those of Christ. There are no symptoms at present of diocesan supervision or synodical interference or superintendence. Such men as Polycarp might write to any of the churches, giving advice either of their own free will, and in token of their affection, or at the request of the churches themselves. But it was only advice, and in no way authoritative. In that day of simple faith and primitive intercommunion, friendly offices were not suspected of any sinister purpose, and therefore were cheerfully accepted and gratefully acknowledged.

There is yet another point illustrated in this ancient epistle, which is worthy of notice, because it introduces us to an acquaintance with the practical working and efficacy of the simple social organization then existing in relation to church affairs. We refer to the frequent appeals on the part of Polycarp to the Scriptures, as the only authoritative guide and rule for Christian men. We omitted to notice the same circumstance in connexion with the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, although we might have done so.\* Polycarp is also express in his references to the written Word, and the tone of his address is such as to lead to the conclusion, that in his day every Christian enjoyed his own individual independency, and was taught to

\* Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians, sect. vii.—xii., &c.; sect. xlvii., where he refers to Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians; sect. liii., where he says, "Ye know full well the holy Scriptures, and have thoroughly searched the oracles of God."

consult the Scriptures as the only authoritative and infallible rule of life. Considering the brevity of his epistle, the quotations in it from the New Testament Scriptures are very considerable. If this be a fair specimen of the manner in which the Christians of that day wrote to one another, as it probably is, there must have been a very general and intimate acquaintance with the writings of the apostles, and a perfect knowledge of their authority as contrasted with the puerilities composed by other men. But while the entire epistle is studded with the bright gems extracted from Scripture, there are also references of a direct character to the state of sentiment in the Christian church at Corinth, in respect to the authority of inspired men and their writings. "Neither I," is the language of the third section, "nor any other such as I am, is able to come up to the wisdom of the blessed and renowned Paul, who, when he was amongst you, through the persons of those who then lived,\* taught accurately and with certainty the word of truth, and who, on leaving you, wrote letters, into which, if you look, you will be able to be built up in the faith delivered to you, which is the mother of us all,† when followed by hope, and accompanied [led forth] by love both towards God, and Christ, and our neighbour. For if any one be within the circle of these things, he has fulfilled the law of righteousness;‡ for he who has love is far from all sin." What reader of these words can doubt respecting the estimate

\* ἐν ὑμῖν κατὰ πρόσωπον τῶν τότε ἀνθρώπων.

† εἰς τὴν δοθεῖσαν ὑμῖν πίστιν, ἥτις ἐστὶ μήτηρ πάντων ἡμῶν. . . .  
So that Polycarp knew nothing of "mother church;" but a good deal of "mother faith!"

‡ Ἐὰν γὰρ τις τούτων ἐντός ᾗ, πεπλήρωκεν ἐντολὴν δικαιοσύνης.

which Polycarp formed of himself as a merely human and fallible teacher, in comparison with such men as Paul? What reader can doubt that the Christians of those days—at least those of Smyrna and Philippi—were taught to regard the word of truth, and the faith once delivered unto the saints, as the only authoritative thing by which the church could be edified—the only real mother of Christian men? What reader can doubt that it was the one aim of both ministers and people to conform themselves, not to church notions and assumptions of clerical precedence and laic subordination, but to those things, within the circle of whose operation righteousness was to be obtained?

So far is Polycarp from placing himself between Christ's people and Christ's word, as if he had the authority of a dogmatizing interpreter, that he does not even write a letter to the Philippians without an express disclaimer of all such assumption. "These things, brethren," he says, "I was not moved by myself to write to you concerning righteousness; but because you before invited me."\* And, at the close of the epistle, he speaks of their "commands" as being obeyed by him.† Indeed, such is the humility of this ancient bishop or presbyter of the Church of Christ, that he disparages his own knowledge of the Scriptures in comparison with that of the Scripture-loving members of the church at Philippi. "For I believe," he says, "that you are well exercised in the sacred Scriptures, and that nothing is hidden from you; but at present this is not granted to me."‡

\* Ταῦτα, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἑμαυτῷ ἐπιτρέψας γράφω ὑμῖν περὶ τῆς δικαιοσύνης· ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ὑμεῖς προεπεκαλέσασθέ με.—Sect. iii.

† Sect. xiii.

‡ Sect. xii. Confido enim vos bene exercitatos esse in sacris literis, et nihil vos latet; mihi autem non est concessum modo.

Here, then, is another witness, whose testimony establishes the fact of the independency of Christian men and churches in the first post-apostolic age! We have heard the venerable Polycarp speak for himself. His words may not be many; but they are sufficient to show the condition of the Christian world in his time. No other contemporary witness comes into court to contradict him; and we are satisfied therefore with putting his evidence on record, as so much clear gain to the cause of religious liberty and truth.

Before we proceed to the next witness for this age, we must notice a circumstance in relation to the value of the last, which ought not to be overlooked. The Epistle to the Philippians, from which all our quotations have been made, was written, it has been supposed by the first critics, about the year A.D. 117, or soon after the martyrdom of Ignatius. Polycarp, however, did not suffer until the year A.D. 167, or fifty years after. The question occurs, how far does the testimony delivered in A.D. 117 afford evidence of the state of the churches in this age? Shall we carry it on through the intervening half century, or is there any additional evidence drawn from other sources, which limits the chronological relations of this? Is there any ground to believe that Polycarp, in A.D. 167, was changed from what his own testimony assures us he was in A.D. 117?—or that the churches of Smyrna and Philippi changed their constitution during this prolonged period?

In reply to such questions as these, we must state our opinion that the causes of an incipient change were here and there at work during this interval, as we shall show in our next chapter; but there is no direct evidence to show that any actual change had

transpired. There is certainly no evidence to prove that Polycarp altered his views in respect to church organization; neither is it at all likely that those churches with which he enjoyed so much intercommunion, would easily depart from their primitive institutions during his lifetime. Whatever errors and heresies might spring up, and whatever indications might now and then appear of the budding of a worldly or ambitious spirit,\* still the actual framework of the church's organization remained unimpaired.

This testimony of Polycarp, then, takes us over a long period of time, and brings us to that of JUSTIN MARTYR, who was contemporary with the latter part of the life of the former, and died soon after, or about A.D. 167. Much controversy has been held on the subject of his writings, their date, and genuineness; and therefore we should not call him in as a witness, were it not our main object to show that there is nothing in that portion of his writings which relates to the practice of the churches, that indicates a departure from the simple congregational principle. He was born in Samaria, in the town called Flavia Neapolis, then a Greek colony, in which the Greek language prevailed. He was a philosopher, and became a Christian for the following reason, as he re-

\* For example—it is related by Irenæus (apud Euseb. iv. 13.) that there was a controversy concerning Easter about the year A.D. 158, in which Anicetus of Rome shewed some portion of that dogmatic spirit which afterwards grew in the breast of the Roman bishops, until it became despotic. On that occasion, according to Irenæus, Polycarp had sufficient influence to preserve the liberties of the churches, and even to soothe Anicetus into good humour and fellowship.—Cave's *Lives of the Apostles*, vol. i. 198.

lates in his own words. "While I still found my delight in the doctrines of Plato, and heard the Christians calumniated, but yet saw them fearless of death and every thing that men deem fearful, I learnt that it was impossible that they should live in sin and lust. I despised the opinion of the multitude; I was proud of being a Christian, and I endeavoured with all my powers to remain one."\* The history of his conversion is related by himself in various particulars, too numerous to be mentioned, and unnecessary for our purpose.† Suffice it to say that he became the author of a considerable number of writings, mostly apologetic. His philosophy in some things perverted his views of the gospel; and while he sought to recommend the truth by the exhibition of its philosophic accuracy and harmony, he almost necessarily marred some of its features in so doing.

What principally concerns us, however, is the testimony of Justin Martyr to the general simplicity of Christian life and worship in that period. Neither Clement nor Polycarp touch upon many things which Justin has narrated in detail. We shall adduce these things in order to show, how, up to the latest period of the first post-apostolic age, great simplicity prevailed in all the service of the church of Christ. If, in addition to this, we find nothing opposed to the preceding testimony given by Clement and Polycarp, in any of Justin Martyr's writings, as is the case, we

\* Apolog. I., quoted, with some omissions, by Neander, *Hist. of the Christian Religion*, &c., ii. 336.

† See his *Dialogue with Trypho*, and his two *Apologies for the Christians*. Cave, in his *Life of Justin Martyr*, has gathered together these particulars; also Neander, in the second volume of his *Hist. of the Christian Religion*, &c.

shall feel justified in stating that the age of independency reached up to, if not, in many essential things, beyond this period.

The principal writings of Justin\* are *two apologies* for Christianity, the first designed for Antoninus Pius, and the second probably for Marcus Aurelius. In both of these, as might be expected, there are references to the faith, and manners, and mode of worship of the Christians of that day. The first apology,† or the one addressed to Antoninus, contains the fullest reference to these things. The following passage, embracing many points of detail, will throw clear light upon the transactions of the churches of the first age. "We bring the convert to those that are called brethren,‡ where they are collected to offer common prayers, both for themselves and for the illuminated person, and for all others, everywhere, earnestly. . . . Prayers being ended, we salute each other with a kiss. Then there is presented to the president of the brethren,§ bread, and a cup of water and wine,|| and he having taken

\* The Epistle to Diognetus, once assigned to Justin, and often printed amongst his works, is now generally referred to a much earlier period. It need hardly be said that there is nothing in it opposed to the views developed in our pages; but every thing in their favour. The best description of this letter is given in Bennett's *Theology of the early Christian Church*, pp. 6—10. See also Hagenbach's *Hist. of Doctrines*, Buch. vol. i. pp. 55—56.

† In some editions this is called the second, *e. g.* Stevens.

‡ τοῖς λεγομένοις ἀδελφοῖς.

§ τῷ προεστῶτι τῶν ἀδελφῶν. Some have said, This is evidently the bishop. From Justin's using the word *president*, however, and that invariably, it is evident, we think, that the word *bishop* had not yet come into ecclesiastical use, to distinguish the president amongst the Presbyters from the rest of the Presbyters.

|| Καὶ κραματος.

them, offers up praise and glory to the Father of all, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and makes much thanksgiving, for having been counted by him worthy of these things. He having finished the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present assent, saying, *Amen*; which in the Hebrew signifies *so be it*. But the president having given thanks, and all the people having responded, those who among us who are called deacons\* give to every one of those present to partake of the bread and wine and water, for which thanks had been given, and (afterwards) carry them to those who are not present. This food is called among us Eucharist, of which no one may partake but he who believes in the things taught by us to be true, and has been washed with that washing which is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and is living so as Christ commanded us.† For we take these things, not as common bread and common drink, but in the same manner as by the Word of God, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was made flesh, and had flesh and blood for our salvation; so also we are taught that that food which is blessed by the word of prayer, that is from him,‡ and from which our own blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Incarnate Jesus. For the apostles in the memorials made by them, which are called the gospels,§ have so delivered that Jesus commanded them, when he took the bread, and blessed it and said: This do in remembrance of me; this is my body; and when he took the cup in like manner and blessed it and

\* Οἱ καλούμενοι παρ' ἡμῶν διάκονοι.

† παρεδωκεν

‡ δι' εὐχῆς λόγου τοῦ παρ' αὐτοῦ.

§ ἐν τοῖς γενομένοις ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἀπομνημονεύμασιν, ἃ καλεῖται εὐαγγέλια.



said, This is my blood, and gave it to them alone. . . . But we afterwards always remind one another of these things, and we that have sufficient relieve those that are in want, and we are with one another always. And with all those things which we bring, [*i. e.* offerings], we bless the Maker of all things through his Son Jesus Christ, and by the Holy Spirit. And on the day called Sunday, there is a gathering into the same place \* of all that live in city or country, and the memorials of the apostles, or the writings of the prophets are read as long as may suffice. Then when the reader† has ceased, the president in a speech gives an admonition or exhortation to the imitation of these excellent things. Then we all rise together, and send forth prayers. And as we have said before, when our prayer has ceased, bread and wine and water are brought. And the president sends forth prayers and thanksgiving such as he is able,‡ and the people praise, saying, Amen. And the distribution, and the participation of the Eucharist is made to each, and is sent to those who are absent by the deacons. Then those who are wealthy and willing, contribute each of his own accord what he is willing ; and the collection is placed with the president, and he relieves the orphans and widows, and the sick, or such as are in want from any other cause, and those who are in bonds, and those who are strangers amongst the people, and in a word care is taken of all who are in need."

If this be a fair specimen, as in all probability it is, of the general practice of the churches, in religious worship, we conclude that very little innovation had as yet been made upon the simplicity of apostolic institu-

\* ἐπὶ το αὐτο.

† ἀναγινωσκοντες.

‡ ὅση δυναμις ἂντις.

tions. There may be exceptionable expressions here and there in the statements of Justin, for which some allowance must be made, when we consider that the age of logomachy and definition had not yet arrived; and there may be an addition to the original institution of the Lord's Supper which could not but be harmful in the long run; but still the whole account shows that this was the day of a comparatively primitive worship. Nothing is said in this, or in any other passage from the same author, which implies that the minister or president held his official position over more than one congregation.\* The deacons retain their original character as servers of tables. Although a reader, distinct from the president or minister, appears to have had place at that time, it is probable that it was a mere matter of convenience for the relief of the minister, and not an ecclesiastical office, any more than that of a clerk for the giving out of hymns in the present day. The minister preached and prayed extempore, since he is said to do both "according to his ability;" an expression which cannot possibly refer to strength of lungs in the reading of a written sermon, or a set form of liturgic service.† Those who composed the church and partook of the Lord's Supper, are emphatically declared to be en-

\* Though the persons who met on Sunday for worship are spoken of as dwelling in town and country, yet they meet in *one* place. To speak of the cure of a minister whose people can all meet in one place as a diocese, is not according to the modern conventional meaning of the term diocese. See Clarkson's "No Evidence for Diocesan Churches," and "Diocesan Churches not yet Discovered in the Primitive Times."

† Reeves, in his Translation of the Apologies, labors hard to shew that the expression which we have translated "according to his ability," means "with all the fervency he is able." Surely

lightened and converted men—men making a credible profession of religion. The contributions of the people were all voluntary. The widows and orphans, the sick, the imprisoned, and the stranger, were all provided for, according to their need, out of the church's fund; and the minister or president was a guardian and father to all.

Probably there might be at this period an excessive reverence for the minister, in consequence of too much being devolved upon him. We cannot, however, discover from Justin any symptoms of the rise of a prelatical order at present, any more than we can of synodical authority. The general view which is given of the church's constitution in this and all other portions of Justin's writings, is, that of a congregational fellowship, distinct in itself in every locality, governed by its own laws, and presided over by its own minister or ministers.

So far then we are authorized to regard the present age as the age of Independency. With some trifling exceptions here and there, such as might arise from individual caprice or ambition, as in the days of the apostles themselves, the churches up to this period were independent. Individual Christians were subject in all matters affecting conscience, and religious faith and practice, to Divine authority alone. When Christians were united with one another in fellowship, the identity of their faith and character was the basis of union. Each fellowship or society was such as could meet in one place, was self-governed, and independent of

Justin would have used some more suitable expression, if he had intended to convey this meaning. See on this subject Clarkson's Discourse concerning Liturgies, Select Works, p. 294, &c. Also King's Primitive Church, part ii. p. 33.

all foreign interference. The intercommunion of churches was considerable, and of course proceeded on the understanding of a community of faith and practice in all the essentials of Christianity. Although the advice of eminent men, such as Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp might be sought for by many churches in cases of difficulty, and although one church might ask counsel from another in certain emergencies, yet no power had as yet arisen by which any church, or any number of churches, could be authoritatively controlled. Although, therefore, to use the words of Neander, "We must be cautious that we do not expect to find, in these first days of the church, any exclusively *golden age* of purity; nor in the visible church any community entirely glorious, and without spot or wrinkle,"\* yet there was more of simplicity than has characterized the church of Christ since, and that simplicity arose from the general prevalence of apostolic, that is, divinely appointed institutions.

We might extend these remarks—in reference to many particulars at least—to periods beyond this. In the writings of Irenæus and Tertullian, whose names come before us on the page of history a little after this time, and indeed in most of the records of the first three centuries, we find abundant evidence of the resistance which was offered to change and innovation in respect to the primitive state of things. But if a line must be drawn, after a general manner, between the age of purely apostolic institutions and the succeeding ages of innovation, subversion, and ultimate total corruption, we think it must be drawn here. Up to this time the churches of Christ, so far

\* Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c., Rose, i. 277, 278.

as their organization is concerned, preserve all the main features by which they were characterized in the age of the apostles ; but from this period those features gradually become changed, until at last the fair aspect, harmonious proportions, and free movements of Christian liberty give place to the harlot visage, hierarchical deformities, and mercenary operations of spiritual despotism.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE SECOND POST-APOSTOLIC AGE; OR THE AGE OF INNOVATION.

[A. D. 167—324].

IN fixing the limits of the first post-apostolic age as we have done in the last chapter, we have been guided by the records which have descended to our times from that period. It has been thought singular that these contemporaneous memorials should be so few and scanty, and many have deplored the circumstance as a loss to all succeeding times. Probably there is some cause for regret; especially if any of the documents of that age have been destroyed, as is by no means improbable, in order that they might not condemn the practices of professing Christians in after periods. We know that many of the early documents of antiquity have been interpolated to such an extent as to be almost worthless; and we can therefore easily believe that others were destroyed for the same reasons. The pious frauds committed by professing Christians in the third and fourth centuries, which have occasioned so much trouble to the critics of modern times, compel us to form a poor opinion of the leading men of those periods, by whom alone they could be committed, and serve to show that there

must have been a wide-spread prevalence of error and insincerity. The days of innocence and artless piety must have given place to those of guile and hypocrisy before such things could have become general. The records of primitive faith and practice are put out of the way, because they raise the blush upon the cheek of imposture and ecclesiastical assumption ! A church, which had forgotten its first love and forsaken its early practices, was afflicted with the tremblings of a spiritual palsy by the ghosts of departed saints ; and so they must be laid !

At the same time, we can hardly conceive it likely that the documents of the first century were either so numerous, or, in themselves, so important as has sometimes been supposed. For the same reason that we assigned for the continuance of apostolic institutions for some time after the apostles had died—namely, the operation of the law of moral momentum—it may be concluded, without doubt, that for some time at least after the apostolic age had closed, there would be little inclination any where in the Christian communities to read any other documents than those of inspired men. The habit which had been acquired, not without some difficulty, of looking to the apostles alone as authorities in religious matters, would not merely be continued in the immediately succeeding periods ; but would probably be for some time stronger than in the apostolic age itself, when that habit was only being formed. For the phenomenon which has so often been observed in the natural world, is illustrative of a similar one in the moral world. The warmest period of the day is not that in which the sun has just arrived at the meridian ; but a little after. In like manner, the operation of moral causes is the

most powerful, not when some would expect them to be so, in the moment of direct action; but a little afterwards, when time has been given for the accumulation of the causal influences. Undoubtedly, it took some time for the apostles to establish their authority over the churches of Christ; and we find that now and then considerable resistance was offered to it, notwithstanding the convincing proofs afforded of their divine delegation. Towards the close of the apostolic era, however, we are warranted in supposing that their prerogative would more seldom be called in question; and that immediately and for some time after it had closed, the submission which had hitherto been rendered would grow into a reverence perhaps not altogether unmingled with superstition, increased amongst the churches by the consciousness of their great loss. Hence the value that was attached to apostolic writings in the first post-apostolic age. Hence, also, the probability that comparatively little value would be attached to the compositions of uninspired men. On the whole, then, we think it likely that, in the first age, men were more anxious to attach themselves to apostolic institutions, and to derive instruction from apostolic writings or traditions, than to fabricate or follow merely human opinions in matters of religion. It was reserved for other periods, when the impression produced by the sanctity and personal authority of the living apostles had vanished from the hearts of Christians, to deluge the church with all the varieties and contradictions of merely human opinion.

On these grounds, then, we think it providential that any genuine documents should have descended



to us from the earliest periods. So far from complaining of their paucity, we are thankful for what we possess; especially when we consider what narrow escapes they must have had in passing safely through periods of fraudulent suppression and interpolation. When we know that sacrilegious hands have been laid on the vessels and treasures of the ancient sanctuary, we are grateful if any have escaped the furtive rapacity of the depredators, and remain to us as real specimens of the riches of a by-gone age.

The period upon which we now enter, besides being more extended, is characterized by a gradual change in respect to the number of contemporaneous writings. Our difficulty, now, is not so much in obtaining evidence, as in attending to it with patience. Voluminous authors, historians, philosophers, commentators, sermonizers, canonists, distract the attention with their variegated productions, and amidst the Babel noise, it is not easy to push our inquiries to a successful issue. To mention the names of all the authors whose works have descended to us from this period would be an useless task. Neither shall we mention any of those events which do not illustrate our particular subject of inquiry. Availing ourselves of the investigations of modern ecclesiastical historians, who have made the study of this subject the business of their lives, we propose to indicate the gradual changes which came over the simple institutions of the apostolic and primitive times. It is only here and there, where conflicting modern interpretations have rendered this mode of procedure needful, that we have consulted the original authorities themselves. Whatever may be advanced, however, in the

shape of fact, will be such as all modern authorities in this department of inquiry are agreed in receiving as such.

Before we proceed to an account of the various changes which took place in relation to the constitution of the Christian church during this period, it seems needful to state that, probably, the germs of many of them were secretly developing themselves during the last age. From the statements of the apostle Paul, we infer that even in the earliest period of the church's history, there were those elementary principles and tendencies at work, which only required time and favourable opportunities for their visible development. His language in the second chapter of the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, affords a key to the interpretation of the general course of post-apostolic history, and should never be forgotten by the historian of the church:—"We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped: so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

And then shall that wicked be revealed whom the Lord shall consume by the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish: because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Whatever historical interpretation be put upon these prophetic words, it is plain that the keen eye of the apostle penetrated beneath the surface of things, as they existed in his day, and detected the secret operation of principles which should afterwards germinate and expand into all the developments and corruptions of an antichristian system—an enthronement of human authority in the very place of Christ! We shall not read the history of the church aright if we do not trace in it the gradual fulfilment of this apostolic prophecy—if we do not detect the working of Satan, the power, the signs, the lying wonders, the deceivableness of unrighteousness, the faith in strong delusions and lies, which characterized the professed church of Christ in succeeding times. The commencement, however,—the underground process, invisible to ordinary eyes—was in the apostolic age itself. Something "let," or prevented, for a season, the outward manifestation; but the "working" was then in existence.

The apostle Peter, in the second chapter of his second general epistle—an epistle addressed to all Christians, and not to any particular church—gives a further

due to the unravelling of this mystery. "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of; and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandize of you." Here, the agency by which great changes were to be introduced is specifically mentioned. The *teachers* would be in fault. Through the instrumentality of the church's instructors, who ought to build it up on the only foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; should such a system of innovation be introduced as should convert the spiritual stones of the living temple into mere articles of merchandize. Christian men should no longer be regarded as Christ's freemen; but as the very slaves of those who ought to be their guardians, and the conservators of their liberties! What history of the church, however comparatively unfaithful, shall we peruse, in which the truth of these Divine predictions is not verified. It is not for us, however, to detect the latent working of those tendencies, by which ultimately such results were realized. We cannot watch those underground processes by which the seeds of things are fostered into growth; we must wait until the cracked and loosened surface of the soil invites our attention to the visible effect of operations that had been hitherto concealed.

In this second post-apostolic age, our attention is thus solicited. The soil in which the church had at first been planted a goodly plant, begins to be broken here and there, and plants of an unnatural growth,

bearing deadly fruit, grow up. It is after the working of Satan, with all deceivableness; yet palpably such as to lead the observer to say,—“An enemy hath done this!” In the course of time, these exotics of the church multiply, fill the air with their poisonous vapours, choke the growth of the plant of God’s right hand planting, and ultimately occupy nearly the whole space of the church’s operations. Using the three principles of Independency as our tests, let us investigate the nature, extent, and causes of this marvellous series of changes.

It would be incorrect to say, in reference to the innovations which took place, that they subverted the three principles of Independency in the order in which we have exhibited them. Sometimes the change commenced with one and sometimes with another of them; but it would be difficult to determine what change or series of changes had the greatest power in the production of the general result. At the same time, we are inclined to think that there were causes at work which altered the general feeling in respect to the *individual independency* of Christians before any very great change took place in reference to other points. At first, all Christians were taught to regard themselves as Christ’s servants alone, dependant upon him, responsible to him; and so long as this state of things continued, all would feel themselves interested in the liberties of all, and nothing would be admitted in the opinions of men or the organization of the churches, subversive of so generally recognized a principle. As the churches, however, increased in number, and heretical opinions prevailed, and men of influence began to form parties, and a sense of immediate responsibility to Christ diminished, the practical

result would be less regard to the rights of conscience and the liberty of private judgment. Although, therefore, in the first post-apostolic age there was no theoretic abrogation of this principle, there are indications of a greater deference to human interpretations of the Divine word, and human sanction for certain lines of conduct, than we think are compatible with a full though unassuming maintenance of the privilege and duty of immediate subjection on the part of every Christian man to Christ alone. A scrupulous anxiety to follow Him, would, so long as it prevailed, preserve not only individual but congregational independence; but let this disappear, and it can hardly be predicted how far other principles may be permitted to come in to corrupt and to destroy.

There was nothing positively wrong in the conduct of the church at Corinth, when it sent delegates to the church at Rome asking for the advice which was given in Clement's epistle. There may have been, however, and there probably was, too much of deference to the judgment of the church at Rome on the one hand, even as probably there had been too much of haste in deposing their own bishops on the other; and if Clement had sent the Corinthians, as has been judiciously observed,\* back to the re-perusal of those inspired writings which had been written to them at a former period in a season of strife, instead of giving any special and separate advice of his own, it is not unlikely that greater benefit would ultimately have been conferred upon the Corinthian Christians. But, after all, it is difficult to decide from the documents which have reached us, how far there may have been a falling away from the right spirit in that early age.

\* Bennett's *Theology of the Early Christian Church*, p. 16.

As we advance, however, to the period of which we are now treating, we see the growth, both rapid and decisive, of certain opinions which never could have received countenance so long as men retained a fast hold upon their individual independence, for the sake of a more complete subjection to Christ. We refer to those opinions which relate to the idea of a **VISIBLE CATHOLIC CHURCH**. This idea sprang up in the earliest period of the age, and quickly developed itself.\* It is thus characterized in the words of Neander, who has given perhaps a more philosophic account of its origin and influence than any other writer.

“This great whole of the catholic church, which in all its scattered parts was still firmly united, was, in its origin, its development, and its constitution, utterly different from all mere human institutions. The consciousness of being a member of such a body, victorious over every opposition of earthly power, and destined for eternity, must have been more lively and more powerful in those who, having, in their earlier years of heathenism, known no bonds of union, except those of a political and secular nature, had been blessed with no feelings of such a moral and spiritual bond of unity, which bound mankind together, as all members of the same heavenly community. Therefore must this feeling have been stronger and more lofty, when all the powers from without sought in vain to tear this bond in sunder. Justly might this unity, which revealed itself outwardly,—this close bond of outward connexion, be of great importance to Chris-

\* The term *Catholic Church* first appears in one of the Ignatian Epistles (ad Smyrn. c. 8) ; but is probably the interpolation of a later period. It next appears in the Epistle of the Church at Smyrna respecting the martyrdom of Polycarp, cap. 8, 16, 19.

tians, as the symbol of that higher life, by the participation in which all Christians were to be united together, as the revelation of the unity of the kingdom of God. In the outward communion of the church, they perceived the blessing of the inward communion of the invisible kingdom of God ; and they struggled for the maintenance of that unity, partly against the idealistic sects, who threatened to tear in sunder the inward bond of religious communion, the bond of faith, and partly against those who, blinded by self-will or passion, founded divisions on mere outward causes, while they agreed in faith with the rest. But this polemical spirit, though it proceeded from a lively Christian feeling, which deeply felt the blessing of religious communion—this inward life in the church, though it proceeded from a truly Christian source of warmth, was apt to seduce men into the opposite extreme of over-prizing the external unity of the church, and of over-prizing the existing forms in the church, with which that unity was combined. As men in the churchly life, as long as it proceeded from inward feelings of Christianity, and was still animated and penetrated by them, and ere it had been benumbed in dead forms, became conscious of this intimate connexion between the visible and the invisible church ; as men, in the communion of this visible church, felt deeply the blessing of communion with the Redeemer and with the whole body of saints, which receives its Divine living powers from Him, its head, and spreads them among its individual members ; it was more likely, on that account, in this polemical contrast, that they should be led away, so as too closely to interweave in idea also, that which had been thus joined and melted together in the



experience and the feelings of every one, and also to lay it down in theory, that it was bound together in a necessary and indissoluble union. And thus then arose the confusion between the visible and the invisible church, the confusion of the inward union of the invisible church, an union of spirit which consists in faith and love, with the outward unity of the visible church, which is dependent on certain and outward forms. As these forms of the church were the instruments through which, by means of the feelings engendered in these forms, men had received the blessing of communion with the invisible head of the church; they were more easily induced too closely to join together form and essentials, the vessel of clay and the inestimable heavenly treasure, to attribute too much to the earthly form, and to consider a subjective union, in the life and hearts of individuals, as an objective and necessary one. This principle would form itself in the following mode; the external church, which exists in this visible outward form, is, with all these outward forms, a Divine institution; we cannot make a distinction here between human and Divine; under this form has the church received Divine things from Christ, and only under this form does she communicate them, and he alone can receive them who *receives* them from her in this *outward* form. The invisible church, the kingdom of God, is represented in this outward form; and inward communion with that invisible church, as well as the participation of all her advantages, is necessarily connected with outward communion with this external church, which exists in these forms.

“ The confusion between the views of the Old and those of the New Testament on the theocracy, which

we remarked above in the notions of the priesthood, also made its appearance again here. As in the Old Testament the establishment and the extension of the theocracy was necessarily connected with many outward earthly things, which were only shadows and figures of that which was to appear in all its reality in Christianity, men would have it, that the theocracy of the New Testament must also depend for its establishment and propagation on similar visible and earthly things; as the theocracy of the Old Testament was necessarily joined with a definite outward and visible priesthood, so also they would have it, that that of the New Testament was also necessarily joined with an outward priesthood of the same sort, Divinely founded also. Men forgot that the difference between the church of Christ and the theocracy in the Old Testament did not merely consist in the difference of outward signs and forms, but that there was a far more important distinction in the relation of the outward to the inward, of earthly things to heavenly and spiritual things. This is a most essential error, and has been the source of many other errors, with consequences of practical importance, which afterwards gradually unfolded themselves.

“ We find this confusion between the conception of the invisible and the visible church, and the doctrine which was deduced from it, of an *outward* church, which could alone confer salvation, and hence of a necessary *outward* unity of that church, first most decidedly pronounced, and carried through most logically, in the remarkable book on the unity of the church, (*de unitate ecclesiæ*.) which Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, wrote after the middle of the third century, in the midst of the divisions with

which he had to contend. This book contains a striking instance of falsehood and truth. If we understand what Cyprian says, as referring to the communion of a higher life, to the necessary inward union with the one divine source of life in Christ, from which alone true life can flow forth on all the members of the communion of saints, and to the necessary communion between this body and their head, through the direction of the heart in faith and feelings:—if we introduce into the conclusions of Cyprian, the difference between a visible and an invisible church, between the inward unity of the kingdom of God, and the outward unity of a visible church; between an inward communion with the church of the redeemed, and an outward connexion with a certain outward form, under which that church, whose foundations are in the inward heart, in faith and in love, appears:—then, indeed, we shall find much truth in what he says against a proud and self-seeking spirit, which struggles to get free from its connexion with the one kingdom of God, whose head, foundation, and centre point, is Christ, and is anxious to set itself up as something independent. ‘Only endeavour,’ says Cyprian, ‘to free the sun-beam from the sun! The unity of sight will not be broken. Break the branch from the tree, and it can bear no fruit! Dissever the stream from the source, and it dries up! Thus also the church, beamed upon by the light of the Lord, extends its beams over all the world; but it is still only one light, which spreads itself into all directions; from the bosom of that church are we all born, nourished by her milk, and animated by her spirit. That which is torn asunder from the original stem, can neither breathe nor live

separate and independent.' This is certainly all just enough, if we understand by that original whole, in connexion with which alone each individual can thrive, the invisible church of the redeemed under their invisible head, Christ; if we attribute that unity only to spiritual communion, and that separation only to a separation in heart; but the fundamental error, by which everything which is really true in itself received a false application, was the transference of these notions from all this to an external church, appearing under distinct outward forms, and necessarily dependent on them; a church which had maintained itself from the time of the apostles, under its existing constitution, by means of the bishops, its pillars, the successors of the apostles, and the heirs of the power which had been delivered to the apostles. Christ, according to this view, had imparted to the apostles, and the apostles, by ordination, had imparted to the bishops, the power of the Holy Ghost; by means of this external transmission, the power of the Holy Ghost, by which alone all religious acts can receive their true efficiency, was shed abroad and preserved to all times through the succession of bishops. Thus by this living and constantly progressing organization of the church, was maintained that Divine life, which is imparted by this intermediate step from the head to all the members that remain in union with this organization; and he who cuts himself off from outward communion with this outward organization, shuts himself out from that Divine life and from the way to salvation. No one can, as an isolated individual, by faith in the Redeemer, receive a share in the Divine life, which proceeds from Him; no one can, by this faith alone, secure for himself all the advan-

tages of the kingdom of God ; but to all this man can alone attain by the instrumentality of the catholic church, which has been preserved by the succession of bishops."\*

As, on the one hand, this idea of the visible Catholic church could never have been promulgated to any extent, where men had not in some measure loosed their hold on primitive truths relating to man's individual responsibility, and therefore independence;† so, on the other, as it grew more definite, and passed from theory into practice, it sapped the foundations of religious liberty, both in the individual and in the congregation, and led to results in many ways most disastrous to the churches' real prosperity. If any one word has had greater magic power than another to blind and deceive men, with "all the deceivableness of unrighteousness," it is this word as applied to the visible church of Christ.‡ Christ's promise to his disciples was, that where *two or three* were met together in his name, there he would be in the midst of them.§ This dogma practically annuls that promise by saying, "If you do not meet together *under the shade of the one universal church*, the promise will not be realized." The apostolic injunction is, "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God."|| This dogma

\* Neander's Hist. of the Christ. Religion, etc., vol. i. p. 214-218.

† Rom. xiv. 12. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God;" xiv. 3. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" xiv. 4. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth," etc., etc.

‡ One reason why we have used the term *aggregate* in our enunciation of the third principle of Independency, is that it *expresses* the idea of *parts* as well as of a whole; whereas the term *catholic* does not, and is therefore all the more potent for evil.

§ Matt. xviii. 20.

|| Rom xiv. 22.

practically cancels that injunction and says, "Hast thou faith? show it to the priest, that he may say whether it agree with the faith of the holy catholic church." The scriptural test of genuine discipleship to Christ is, "By their fruits shall ye know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"\* This dogma introduces an altogether different test, by which this—the only practicable test where men cannot read the heart—is virtually set aside; for it says, "By their union with the visible catholic church shall ye know them. Can there be salvation out of its pale? Can there be the ministration of truth except where there is the true succession? Can there be faith except where the church approves?"

Such, in effect, was the operation of this dogma, and such it continues to be, wherever it lays hold upon the imaginations of men. Its tendency is to condense the Bible into a creed, to elevate the minister into the master, to drive men from Scripture and from "mother faith,"† to the sacraments and to "mother church," for salvation; to draw the eye from Him who is in heaven, the prophet, priest, and king of our profession, that it may look round upon the whole horizon of a visible ecclesiastical unity, in order to ascertain the will of God; and as this wide range of vision cannot be taken, its ultimate tendency is to thrust Christ from his mediatorial throne, and place the pope, as universal vicar of Christ, there instead—the representative of a visible catholic church!

Undoubtedly there was some appearance of truth in this dogma, as Neander has shown: there was

\* Matt. vii. 16—20.

† See back, page 153.

"the working of Satan" in it, with "all the deceivableness of unrighteousness." Of course the apostles were the first instructors of the church, the first planters of churches, the first founders of the church's institutions, the first appointers of office and order, the first administerers of Christian sacraments. But did not many who received apostolic instruction make "shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience"? Did not many of the churches planted by the apostles "forsake their first love"? Were not their institutions abused even in their day? Did not a Demas and a Diotrephes prove that even apostolic ordination and appointment were nothing where the Christian spirit was wanting? Was not a Simon Magus sufficient proof that baptism could not regenerate, and the corruption of the Corinthian church sufficient proof that the Lord's Supper was not necessarily a means of grace, much less a viaticum to heaven? And if these things be true, must it not be inferred that something more than a linking on by some imaginary succession of office to apostolic times is needful to the church's existence, much more to the church's unity?

In a word, this notion of the visible catholicity of the church of Christ was entirely opposed to the Redeemer's saying respecting his kingdom—that it would not come "with observation," and that its advancement could not be pointed to with the finger as a visible thing, of which men might say "Lo here!" or "Lo there!" The only visible union which could exist between Christ's people was that arising from a charitable reception of one another on the ground of a credible profession of faith in Him—a reception which was by no means to swell out into a judgment

respecting conscience and the heart. Such a spirit of judging had been forbidden both by Christ and his apostles. While the eye of Omniscience alone could penetrate to the secrets of the breast, all who professed attachment to the Redeemer were to receive one another in love, as those for whom Christ had died.

Unscriptural, however, and pernicious as this dogma was, it grew during this age with great rapidity, and became a kind of nucleus of corruption. Some good men, and it may be with sincerity of a certain kind, lent their aid in giving it practical confirmation. Strong delusions reigned where before a simple faith and practice had prevailed. No power arose sufficient to arrest the onward and downward progress of the church in respect to all that was spiritual and vital in religion. Here and there a feeble voice was raised against the innovations of the day; but in vain. The spirit of the world took possession of the church, and developed itself in all the forms of ambition, ostentation, selfishness, sensuality, rapacity and persecution; until, at last, the kingdom which was not to be of this world, became the most worldly and powerful of all the kingdoms that ever had being on earth.

We must not overlook the fact, however, that the dogma, on which we have dwelt so much at length, *grew*, and thereby declared its human origin. It had no place in the apostolic age, nor in that immediately succeeding, except in a very imperfect degree.\* As, however, heresy, real or supposed, arose and became formidable in the opinion of the church's instructors, it came into use as a con-

\* Gieseler's Ecc. Hist., vol. i. p. 92.



venient supplement or substitute for argumentative refutation. Irenæus and Tertullian\* are the first to develop it with this declared purpose,† and found it probably more successful than they could have expected. The ministers of the churches gladly availed themselves of a method of silencing heretics, so simple, so easily practicable, and so much calculated to increase their own official importance; and, at length, Cyprian,‡ boldly announcing and unfolding it in a systematic treatise, led the way to its practical realization in all the movements of the catholic church. Then, to use the words of Gieseler, “the idea strove to give itself an outward expression in the unity of everything belonging to the church. While religious faith was made interchangeable with the intelligent expression of it in doctrine, men began also to consider the unity of the latter as necessary to the unity of the church, and to limit freedom of inquiry more and more.”

It is scarcely necessary to say, that the innovation, or rather class of innovations, introduced by, or co-ordinate with, the development of this unscriptural view of the church of Christ, was subversive of all the principles of religious Independency. We have admitted that probably in the first age, and more espe-

\* Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, died somewhere about the close of the second century. His work against heresies was probably written between A.D. 177 and A.D. 192. Tertullian is thought to have died at Carthage, A.D. 245, out of the pale of the catholic church—a heretic, although his principal writings were against heresy!

† Irenæus, iii. 3. Tertullian de præscr. hæc. c. xxi; quoted by Gieseler, i. 159.

‡ Cyprian, bishop at Carthage, was beheaded A.D. 258. His work *de unitate ecclesiæ* is the treatise referred to in the text.

cially towards its close, there was not that regard to individual responsibility, and to individual liberty of conscience, as essential to its practical operation, which the apostles had inculcated on the primitive Christians. The falling away at that time, however, was in feeling rather than in action, and took the form of an unconscious spiritual declension, which could only be recognized in its results. But when this view of the church's visible unity prevailed, the very theory of individual independence was subverted, and men gave up their consciences and their souls to the guardianship of their fellow-men.

We are not surprised, then, to find that at the same period,—whether as cause or effect, it is difficult to decide,—there should be a change in respect to the principle of *congregational Independency*, both internal and external. This change we now proceed to notice.

The first thing demanding attention respects the change which took place in the name by which the spiritual officers of the church were distinguished. We have seen how in the early period of the church's history there were two words in use, the origin of which may easily be accounted for.\* We have also seen how for a long period these names were used interchangeably as two names of one and the same class of persons. We have now to show how a gradual change in the ecclesiastical use of these words crept into the church, which led to results of much greater consequence than might have been anticipated.

We have already noticed how Clement of Rome and Polycarp make mention of *bishops* and *presbyters*—

\* See back, pp. 50—53.

namely, in such a manner as to convince the reader of their epistles that in their age there was no more distinction between the two names than is usually discovered in synonymous words,—such as magistrate and ruler, house and habitation, etc. Bishops were presbyters, and presbyters were bishops. Whichever term was used, the same official party was understood to be referred to. In the course of time, however, a distinction was made, which divided the spiritual officers into two classes. This distinction arose very gradually, and not perhaps with much uniformity of practice for some time, from the requirements of the congregational churches in their assembled and deliberative character. It was expedient at their church meetings that one should preside. At first, probably, this presidency might be determined at the time of meeting, or might come round to all the spiritual officers in turn, or might be given to him who was the most reverend for age, or the most fitted for the position by experience. Wherever the post of presidency became permanent, from either of the last-mentioned causes, the party occupying it would of necessity be designated by some appropriate term. In Justin Martyr's time, if we may judge from his writings, the term *president* (πρόεδρος) was used; but, soon after, the term *bishop* took its place, most likely because it seemed more fitting to be applied to the individual who *seemed* to take the "oversight" in a more special manner than the other spiritual officers. We can imagine how parties wishing to name the president amongst the bishops or presbyters, would come to speak of him as "*the* bishop," by way of eminence; and how gradually this word would cease to be used in reference to the rest, more particularly

in those churches where the presidential office became permanent and influential. Here, then, is the first development of the distinction between bishops and presbyters—the first budding of hierarchical ranks and orders in the church. Probably the Christians of that day little imagined how by this trifling change in the nomenclature of the church's officers, they were taking the first step towards the subjugation of their own religious rights and liberties. The little streamlet which may be divided into two by the human foot, or even by a pebble, near the fountain head, in its after progress may present the aspect of two rivers wide asunder from one another, and increasing the distance between them the farther their onward flow.

It must not be supposed, however, that at first this distinction in the use of the words bishop and presbyter followed any very strict law of usage. Time was necessary to confirm it, and something even more than time. So long as the president-bishop was regarded as a president only, it would often be needful to say "*the* bishop," with an emphasis on the word, in order to distinguish him from the rest of the bishops of the church. Therefore we expect to find in the writings of the period now referred to an arbitrariness in the use of the two names of office. We expect to find *the* bishop sometimes spoken of as distinct from the other bishops or presbyters, and sometimes as one of and one with them.

This is actually the case, as Neander says, up to "even the end of the second century."\* Irenæus, for example, who wrote at the close of the second century,

\* Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c., vol. i. p. 194.  
See also Gieseler's Ecc. Hist., vol. i. p. 109.

or between A.D. 177 and A.D. 192, sometimes uses the names bishop and presbyter as synonymous, and sometimes distinguishes between them. In one part he speaks of the episcopal succession as belonging to the presbyters, evidently implying that presbyters were bishops; \* while in another part of his writings he speaks of Paul's calling the elders of Ephesus together at Miletus, in such a manner as to imply that he considered the elders divided into two classes, namely, bishops *and* presbyters.† From such evidence as this we learn how arbitrary the use of the two names was at that time. We see the spirit of innovation at work, and trace the progress of its operations. This relation of the two words, and of the ideas conveyed by them, continued for some time after the period in which Irenæus wrote, even up to the time of Tertullian, who died A.D. 245. We then see a more marked difference and distance of meaning between the names and offices; although even Tertullian at times speaks of both under the one general designation of seniors.‡ But before we mention the precise nature of this further change, we must advert to some other innovations which led to it, and in many ways affected the general constitution of the church.

We refer to the rise and growth of SYNODICAL AS-

\* Irenæus adv. Hæreses, iii. 2, iv. 26. v. 20, successiones presbyterorum, &c.

† Ibid. iii. 14. In Mileto enim convocatis Episcopis et Presbyteris, qui erant ab Epheso, et a reliquis proximis civitatibus, &c.: "For the bishops and presbyters being called together at Miletus, who were from Ephesus and from the other neighbouring cities," &c. It is scarcely needful to point out the discrepancy between Irenæus and what we find in Acts xx.

‡ Apologet. ch. xxxix.

**SEMBLIES.** During the apostolic age, as we have seen,\* such convocations were unknown. There are no traces of them in the greater portion of the first post-apostolic age; and if, as is probable, they began to develop themselves towards the close of that age, it was in a very simple manner. The church of Christ in that period did not think of delegating to others the power of settling controversy. Evidence and argument were considered to be independent of numbers. A people who had so long been in a minority against the world had not yet quite forgotten that majorities might possibly be in the wrong. The words of Christ, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me," still sounded in the ear of the Christian world. The injunctions of the apostle, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good;" "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works;" were still held in remembrance and practically obeyed. At the same time it should be observed, that the very piety of the early Christians prepared them to be the dupes of designing men; and the catholicity of spirit which they cherished, and which naturally sought to exhibit itself in some outward and visible form,† opened a way for change and innovation whenever the favourable occasion might present itself. The consequences which attend the progress of change were not then known and under-

\* See back, book i. chap. v.

† Neander's *Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c.*, vol. i. p. 207.

stood as they now are. The bitter experience through which the church has passed since that period was never imagined to be a possible thing under any circumstances, much less as the result of early departure from primitive and apostolic institutions. As the "mother of all living" little knew how her one rash act would bring death and woe upon all her posterity, so the Christians of this period little imagined how by their too easy concession to the spirit of innovation most of the evils which have afflicted the church would be ultimately introduced. They yielded, however, to the voice of the seducing spirit. Satan transformed himself into an angel of light, and even the elect were deceived by the subtlety of his approaches under the guise of friendship and love. The insinuating admonitions to the outward manifestation of a Christian unity which assailed their ears, gradually acquired all the power of a spell over their minds. The waves which stole in upon the shore were welcomed, because of the gentleness of their first advances. No defences were reared, no breakwater was erected, because no danger was apprehended. But it was discovered—alas! only when too late—that place had been given to an element of storms and tempests, desolation and death.

In reference to the gradual progress of the change now under consideration, all our ecclesiastical historians are agreed.\* In order that our views on this important subject may be fully confirmed in the mind of the reader, we proceed to adduce the testimony of

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\* See the Cent. Magdeb. Basil, 1629, p. 402, for a striking reference to an early canon (No. 35), which limits the authority of the bishop; so that he may do nothing contrary to the conscientious conviction of all in the several parishes of a province. *Sed*

some of those who are most worthy of confidence as impartial narrators of fact.

"During a greater part of the second century," says Mosheim, "the Christian churches were independent of each other; nor were they joined together by association, confederacy, or any other bonds but those of charity. Each Christian assembly was a little state, governed by its own laws, which were either enacted, or, at least, approved by the society. But, in process of time, all the Christian churches of a province were formed into one large ecclesiastical body, which, like confederate states, assembled at certain times in order to deliberate about the common interests of the whole. This institution had its origin among the Greeks, with whom nothing was more common than this confederacy of independent states, and the regular assemblies which met in consequence thereof at fixed times, and were composed of the deputies of each respective state. But these ecclesiastical associations were not long confined to the Greeks: their great utility was no sooner perceived than they became universal, and were formed in all places where the Gospel had been planted.\* To these assemblies, in which the deputies or commissioners of several churches consulted together, the name of *sy-*

*nec ille, præter omnium conscientiam, faciat aliquid in eorum parochiis.* The compiler then adds: "That canon does not speak of apostles, but of bishops. Whence it is apparent that, not in the time of the apostles, but after their death, many churches were associated in this manner, for the sake of a certain order and edification." *Unde patet, non tempore apostolorum; sed iis mortuis, ejusmodi ratione plures Ecclesias, propter ordinem aliquem et ædificationem, esse consociatas.*

\* Tertullian de Jejuniis, cap. xiii.



*nods* was appropriated by the Greeks, and that of *councils* by the Latins; and the laws that were enacted in these general meetings were called *canons*, i. e. *rules*.

“These *councils*, of which we find not the smallest trace before the middle of this century, changed the whole face of the church and gave it a new form, for by them the ancient privileges of the people were considerably diminished.” \*

Similar to this, only more explicit, is the testimony of Neander. “Christianity,” he writes, “produced among its genuine professors from the first a lively catholic spirit, and thence, also, an inward and mutual as well as outward connexion. This connexion must, from the nature of human things, assume a definite form, and this form was modelled after the existing form of those social connexions among which Christianity first made its appearance. A sisterly system of equality in the relation of the churches to each other would, independently of these particular circumstances, have best corresponded to the spirit of Christianity, and might have been most advantageous to its free and undisturbed publication. But these circumstances soon introduced a system of subordination into the relations of the churches to each other, into which Christianity might enter, just as into all other human institutions, which contain nothing that is sinful by its very nature; but this system afterwards obtaining too great sway, exercised a restraining and destructive influence on the development of Christian doctrines and life.” †

\* Mosheim's Ecc. Hist., cent. ii. part ii. chap. ii.

† Neander's Hist of the Christ. Religion, &c. vol. i. pp. 207, 208.

Again, a little further on he writes,—“These provincial synods do not appear as a constant and regular institution, fixed to definite times, until the end of the second or the beginning of the third century; and it was in this case a peculiarity of one country, where particular local causes may have introduced *such* an arrangement earlier than in other regions. This country was, in fact, exactly Greece, where, from the time of the Achaic league, the system of confederation had maintained itself; and as Christianity is able to connect itself with all the peculiarities of a people, provided they contain nothing immoral, and entering into them, to take itself a peculiar form resembling them; so also it might easily happen, that here the civil federal spirit, which already existed, worked upon the ecclesiastical catholic spirit, and gave it earlier than in other regions a tolerably good form; so that out of the representative assemblies of the civil communities (the Amphietyonic council), were formed the representative assemblies of the ecclesiastical communities (*i.e.*, the provincial synods). As the Christians, in the consciousness that they are nothing, and can do nothing, without the Spirit from above, were accustomed to begin all important business with prayer; they prepared themselves here also for their general deliberations by common prayer, at the opening of these assemblies, to Him, who has promised that he will enlighten and guide by his Spirit, those who believe in him, if they will give themselves up to him wholly; and that he will be amongst them, where they are gathered together in his name.”\*

“But this confidence, in itself just and salutary,

\* Neander's Hist. of the Christ. Religion, &c. vol. i. p. 212.

ciple of congregational Independency, both externally and internally. For a time—so long as things went on smoothly and all was harmony—each church might act out its own religious views, while, at the same time, all the churches might act in concert. But so soon as differences of opinion arose, either the minority must yield or the synod have only a nominal power to act in its representative character. Thenceforth only two courses remained open to any dissentient church in any particular province—blind submission or schism. As we have already intimated, there were some who refused this submission, and called in question the power of the synods themselves, alleging their novelty as a sufficient proof of their being unscriptural and unwarranted. But, on the other hand, the majority were prepared to submit. Rather than disturb the supposed harmony of the churches, they would conclude a dishonourable peace with the church's rulers, and, by the very concession, augment the power of synodical domination.

But now let us glance *again* at the change which transpired in the official representatives of the churches—the bishops and presbyters—now no longer one, but divided into two classes. We saw, a little way back, how it was that the one office became two; let us now trace the influence of the provincial synods in confirming the hierarchical distinction which had commenced, making it yet more marked and positive.

It is easy to imagine how, in any case where express provision is not made against it, the periodic association of numbers is apt to confer influence and authority upon a few who may occupy the post of presidents *or leaders*. In all deliberative assemblies this tendency

is exhibited ; and the introduction of a religious element or character into the composition of such assemblies, so far from diminishing aught from the tendency, seems rather to augment it. In ordinary cases ability to speak and superiority of judgment or piety ; or in cases of division, where party spirit reigns and rules, an acknowledged leadership at the head of any one of the parties ; is sufficient to make the distinction of which we are speaking. But, in the present case, the very office held by the bishops as the representatives of entire societies, would create for them a precedence over all other delegates, whether presbyters or private Christians, which courtesy would easily grant and custom would confirm. Thus, in the course of time, the distance between a bishop of a congregational church and his presbyters would be widened, and that which at first was only nominal would come to be a very grave reality. As it would be impossible for the members of all the churches to meet in the provincial gatherings, but only a few delegated by them ; private Christians would soon feel themselves quite subordinate to their own officers assembled with them. This feeling would beget indifference, and gradually the presbyters and bishops alone would be thought sufficient to manage the business of the representative assembly. If, in addition to this, the synods were generally admitted to have the power of determining matters of controversy or discipline ; it is apparent how the office which was once subordinate to the authority of the congregational church would soon rise above it, and, in many instances, would grow into a "lordship over God's heritage." The bishop of the congregational church would feel that he had now an authority derived from his connexion with the synod, which he

never had before, when he was simply a president over one Christian society. The presbyters, also, although subordinate to the bishop, were elevated above the people; and, perhaps, in most instances were willing to defer on the one hand, where they could claim precedence of office on the other. Thus both offices would be magnified beyond their just limits, and the authority of the congregational church would suffer in proportion.

We are not surprised, therefore, to find that about this period (the early part of the third century) a distinction came to be introduced between private Christians and their church officers which has continued to exist ever since. We refer to the names *clergy* and *laity*, with the corresponding ideas attaching to the two relative terms. Originally the first of these words was applied to all Christians—the whole flock of Christ.\* It was not supposed that office in the church made a man worthy of Divine choice, or gave him a special title to a heavenly inheritance. So far was the apostle Paul from thinking so, that we find him fearing lest, after all his official service, he should be “cast away.” Now, however, as the distinction between the people and their ministers became a practical thing, it required those distinguishing terms which are usually sought after in such cases; and the aggrandizing spirit of the church’s officers led them to appropriate the term *clergy* to themselves.†

\* 1 Pet. v. 3. “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage;” where the word “heritage” should have been translated *clergy* (κληροί).

† In the fourth century the term *clergy* was not sufficient; and so the humble-minded ministers gave themselves the exclusive title of *Christians*, and spoke of *Christianity* as being theirs by right, and theirs only.—Gieseler’s Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 170, note 2.

This use of the term was favoured by the erroneous views which were spreading at that time respecting the analogy between the Levitical priesthood and the Christian ministry. Even while the idea of an universal Christian priesthood was still faintly maintained,\*—a spiritual priesthood for the offering up of spiritual sacrifices, “holy and acceptable to God,” “through Jesus Christ, the great High Priest of our profession”—the idea of the Christian ministry being in an *emphatic* sense a priesthood, and official service a sacrifice, rapidly gained ground; and, harmonizing as it did with other erroneous church principles, it gave a consistency to the hierarchical practices of the age, which confirmed and consolidated them at last into one symmetrical but anti-scriptural whole. “The false conclusion was drawn,” says Neander, “that as there had been in the Old Testament a visible priesthood, joined to a particular class of men, there must also bethe same in the New; and the original evangelical notion of a general spiritual priesthood fell therefore into the back-ground. This error is to be found already in Tertullian’s time (A.D. 223-245), since he calls the bishop “*Summus sacerdos*,” high priest,† an appellation which was certainly not invented by him, but taken from a habit of speaking and thinking already prevalent in a certain part, at least, of the church. This name also imports that men already compared the presbyters with the priests; and the deacons, or spiritual persons generally, with the Levites. We can

\* Irenæus, iv. 20, says “all the just have the sacerdotal order;” *omnes enim justi sacerdotalem habent ordinem*. Tertullian also, *De Exhort. Castit.* cap. 7, says, “and are not we laymen priests?” *nonne et laici sacerdotes sumus?*

† *De Baptismo*, cap. xvii.

judge from this how much the false comparison of the Christian priesthood with the Jewish, furthered again the rise of episcopacy above the office of presbyters. In general, the more they degenerated from the pure Christian view into the Jewish, the more the original free composition of the Christian church became changed.”\*

Thus one false step was succeeded by another; thus one erroneous notion engendered or coalesced with many more. The apparently trivial distinction between the presbyters or bishops and their president, led to a distinction between the use of the two originally synonymous names “presbyters” and “bishops;” this distinction of names led to further change in the idea of office, as designated by the two names; synodical meetings or councils divide the bishop from the presbyters yet more widely, and at the same time separate the Christian church into two classes, composed of clergy and laity. Yet further false notions creep in, whereby deacons and others are regarded as Levites, presbyters as priests,† and bishops as high-priests; and, finally, acting upon all these, and being reacted upon in turn, the idea of a visible catholic church cements the structure of anti-Christian error, and seeks to realize itself in the actual condition of the so-called church of Christ.‡

But we must now notice some collateral innovations, and the further changes which grew out of, or co-ordinately with them.

\* Neander’s *Hist. of the Christian Religion*, &c. vol. i. p. 197, 198.

† This is the origin of the term “priests” as applied to one of the “orders” of the Church of England.

‡ Gieseler’s *Ecc. Hist.* vol. i. p. 257, 258.

The distinction between the clergy and laity was first made in the latter part of the second century.\* Soon after this, the provincial synods came to be held regularly every spring and autumn, at least in many provinces † In connexion with these periodical meetings, the town-bishops gradually acquired great importance, as the organs by whom the country bishops, or chorepiscopi,‡ communicated to the assembly a knowledge of the state of things in their churches. By this means they came to be considered as superior to the country bishops, and had a kind of diocesan superintendence over them. In many cases the country churches received their ministers on the appointment of the town-bishop nearest to them; or, if they were permitted to choose their own ministers, it was on the understanding of a tacit subordination to the bishop and presbyters of the mother-church. In some instances, such churches were considered as only portions of the town-church, and were in all things subject to the town-bishop; a presbyter, or even a deacon, being appointed to take them under local supervision. Thus the way was prepared for diocesan episcopacy, in combination with presbyterial arrangements. In the middle of the third century, there were probably as many as six-and-forty presbyters in

\* Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 170. Coleman's Antiquities, chap. ii. sec. iv.

† Ibid. p. 261.

‡ "After the number of Christians had greatly increased in the country, separate churches in the country were now frequently formed, which attached themselves either to the district (*παρουσία*) of the nearest town-bishop, and received from him a presbyter or deacon; or chose their own bishops (*χωρεπίσκοποι*), who, however, soon came to be in a certain state of dependance on the nearest town-bishop."—Ibid.



the church at Rome, with Cornelius as bishop at their head; the churches, or rather branch-churches, in the neighbouring districts being subject to, and religiously provided for, by them. Congregational Independency became henceforth absorbed and destroyed by what Neander terms "the first great church union between the churches of the city and of the country, which together formed one whole."\*

But this was not all. That which happened in respect to towns and their neighbouring villages, also took place in reference to cities and their neighbouring towns. Unity and uniformity were the order of the day. If village churches were not capable of managing their own affairs without the superintendence of the town church, why should town churches be thought capable of managing their own affairs without the superintending care of the church of the capital or metropolis? At the provincial synod, the bishop of the metropolis received more reverence and possessed more influence than the town-bishops. Why should he not be distinguished from them, even as they had been distinguished from their presbyters? What objection could there be to further subordination for purposes of order and union? Why not regard all the churches and bishops of the several towns as in some sense united under one head, in the person of the *metropolitan* bishop? This further change, then, was in effect brought about—gradually—by almost imperceptible degrees—at first only in the east—and in such a manner as not to involve an appearance of great assumption on the part of the metropolitans for some time; but,

\* Hist. of the Christian Religion, vol. i. p. 208, 209.

ultimately, with results affecting the entire complexion of the church's constitution.\*

These changes did not at present, as we have hinted, assume this form in the west; but were mainly confined to the east, where Christians and Christian churches were more numerous. There, Rome became the ecclesiastical metropolis of a great part of Italy, while in other parts the paucity of churches rendered hierarchical associations a matter of impossibility. It is easy to perceive how the establishment of these large ecclesiastical bodies would necessarily involve further changes, as time rolled by, and fresh occasions were created, or were supposed to be created, for additional authority and consolidation. If at first the cities in general were regarded as the centres of power and union; in the course of time the principal amongst these were regarded and spoken of as pre-eminent. Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth, very soon acquired a celebrity beyond that of minor cities; and as they had been more nearly connected with the personal labours of the apostles and evangelists, a kind of precedence was given to them in the sentiments of the churches generally, which grew more and more powerful every day. They were called the *seats of the apostles*, the *mother churches*, and so forth.† When any question of a controversial kind arose, the first inquiry was, "How do these churches regard it? What is the opinion of those who have been for so long a time the guardians of apostolic traditions?"‡

\* Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, vol. i. p. 209.  
Gieseler's Ecc. Hist, vol. i. p. 262.

† *Ecclesiæ, sedes apostolicæ, matricæ ecclesiæ.*

‡ Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, vol. i. p. 210.

Thus the churches themselves, fallen away from their first regard for Scripture and forgetting their own responsibility, prepared the chain for their own necks.\*

But sufficiently centralizing as the system of the church's constitution may now be thought to have become, there was a spirit of consolidation at work which did not allow the matter to rest here. If the cities in general, with their satellite dependencies, are to regard the "apostolic churches" as their centres of organization, why should not a further advance towards unity be made? Why should not Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch—the largest diocesan churches and so well suited for the purpose—be looked upon as the three general centres of influence and union? And—it was whispered—why should not the church of Rome, the capital city of the world, have the first place, as the nucleus of the whole ecclesiastical system? Many things seemed to favour this last idea.

The apostles Paul and Peter, it was asserted, had both taught the church at Rome, and had suffered martyrdom in that city. From Rome the greater portion of the nations of Europe had received the gospel. The bishops of Rome had early distinguished themselves by their benevolence to the remotest churches. By a central superintendence and agency at Rome, the general concerns of the churches in the Roman empire could best be directed. Rome con-

\* We are reminded of the words of the poet:—

——— "No foreign foe could quell  
Thy soul, till from itself it fell.  
Yes! *self-abasement* paved the way  
To foreign bonds, and despot sway."

tained the apostolic mother church to which the greater part of the west appealed. Whatever took place at Rome would be best known to all, in consequence of the constant intercourse which existed between it and all other cities and towns. Even in the time of Irenæus, Rome was regarded in this two-fold light; as an apostolic seat, and a central place towards which most of the traffic of the west tended—a place to which every church from time to time sent its delegates, either virtually or formally, and from which other churches received them in turn.\*

The “church letters” which it was customary to give to those who moved from place to place, for the purpose of affording honourable testimonials to such as were recognized Christians, and of preserving the churches of the various districts of the empire from being imposed on by deceivers and impostors; connected all the churches under that at Rome, and contributed to augment its influence.† Of course there would be the greatest amount of intercourse with Rome on the part of the individual churches, on the one hand; and the value attached to a testimonial which emanated from the mother church would soon come to be practically felt everywhere, on the other.

\* Irenæus, book iii. chap. iii. *Ad hanc ecclesiam necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam.* “It is a matter of necessity for the whole church (that is, through its individual members) to meet here.” See Neander’s note on this passage,—*Hist. of the Christian Religion*, vol. i. p. 210.

† Gieseler’s *Ecc. Hist.* vol. i. p. 263, note 7. Neander’s *Hist. of the Christian Religion*, vol. i. p. 210. These letters were termed “forms” and “letters of communion”—*epistolæ formatæ, epistolæ communicatoriæ*—*γραμματα τετυπωμενα, γραμματα κοινω-νικα*. Other terms also were used, according to the specific object in view.

Thus all things conspired to augment the influence of the Roman church, and to make it a nucleus of ecclesiastical power. Still the pre-eminence enjoyed was purely conventional, and the result of a generally diffused sentiment of reverence, rather than of ecclesiastical enactment. All bishops were theoretically equal in dignity and power; and each in his own diocese was answerable to God only for his conduct. Cyprian (A.D. 256) is very decided in his views on this subject. According to him, the unity of the episcopate was derived from the harmony of the bishops in general;\* neither did he allow that any one might be considered a bishop of bishops.† Even while a certain superior respect might be paid to the church at Rome, there was no concession of actual rights over the other churches.‡ Firmilian, of Cæsarea, a contemporary of Cyprian, speaks disparagingly and even contemptuously of the Roman authority, and sets it down as mere pretension.§ We are therefore compelled to regard the superiority of Rome at this period as sentimental rather than real.|| It could not be enforced for want of political power. It was often disputed with success. It was rather manifested in the spirit of a haughty and insolent bearing

\* Cyprian, ep. lii. *Episcopatus unus episcoporum multorum concordie numerositate diffusus.*

† Ibid. in Conc. Carthag. *Neque quisquam nostrum episcopum se esse episcoporum constituit.*

‡ Ibid. ep. lv. ; ad Cornelium, ep. lxxii. ; ad Stephanum.


§ Firmilian to Cyprian. *Eos autem, qui Romæ sunt, non ea in omnibus observare, quæ sint ab origine tradita, et frustra Apostolorum auctoritatem prætere, &c.*

|| Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, vol. i. pp. 221—225, 226 ; Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. pp. 265—285, 286.

on the part of its bishop, than in any overt acts; and if it had not been favoured by some peculiar circumstances in after times, would probably have been only in a small degree more harmful than the previous changes which had come over the constitution of Christ's church.

There were, however, occasions even now, in which the Romish prelates attempted to rattle an artificial thunder of excommunication and anathema. Victor first, and Stephen afterwards, sought to "lord it over God's heritage," and indulged themselves in a wholesale excommunication of those churches which refused to follow their views.

The first of these, in A.D. 190, renounced communion with the churches of Asia Minor, because of a difference of opinion respecting the time of Easter; and the manner in which his spirit and conduct were resisted shews how different the position of a bishop was at that period from what we find it a few centuries later, and in the present day. Irenæus wrote him a letter in the name of the churches of Lyons and Vienna, in which he blamed him severely. He reminded him of the manner in which his predecessor, Anicetus, had yielded to better counsels than his own, and says, "We live together in peace, without regarding these differences; and the differences in our regulations about the fasts, makes our agreement in faith shine forth more clearly. . . . The apostle commanded us to judge no man in respect of meats or drink, or fasts, new moons, or Sabbaths. Whence, then, come controversies?—whence divisions? We celebrate feasts; but in the leaven of wickedness and evil, because we divide the church of God and observe outward matters, while we leave the weightier



ters of love and faith untouched. We have nevertheless learned from the prophets that such feasts and such fasts are displeasing to the Lord."\* Thus did the bishop of Lyons check the arrogance of the haughty bishop of Rome.

It was more than half a century after this, or A.D. 253, that Stephen endeavoured to obtain the ascendancy over the churches of Christ. A dispute had arisen of considerable magnitude, and affecting the position of many parties, as well as the custom of the church, respecting the validity of the baptism performed by heretics. Like most disputes, it was long agitated without being brought to a decision; and would probably have died away at last, the several parties following their respective opinions without prejudice to that of the rest. Stephen, however, grew impatient, and sought to terminate the controversy in a practical and violent manner. He excommunicated the bishops of Asia Minor, Cappadocia, Galatia, and Cilicia. His opinion was, that baptism by heretics was valid; while they considered it as no baptism at all, on account of the heresy of those who administered it. Besides renouncing communion with them, he gave a false interpretation to their views, and called them by the nickname of "Rebaptizers" and "Anabaptists."† The dispute, however, was not to be so easily settled. The violence of the Roman bishop fanned the flames of contention. The discussion extended to North Africa; and although the old Romish custom had been followed here by a certain party, it turned ulti-

\* Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c. vol. i. pp. 342, 343; Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. pp. 215, 216.

† Ἀναβαπτισται

mately against Rome. Two synods were held at Carthage, A.D. 255, both of which determined that "the baptism of heretics was *not* to be considered as valid." Thus another instance was afforded of resistance to Romish pride, and even to Romish customs. "We are not governed by custom," said Cyprian, who was bishop of Carthage at the time, "but we are overcome by reason. Peter did not despise Paul because he had formerly been a persecutor of the church; but he received the counsel of truth, and easily acceded to the just reasons which Paul urged. He thus gave us an example of unity and patience; that we might not be too much enamoured of our own way, but might rather make that our own way which is suggested to us at times, with profit and advantage by our colleagues, if it be true and lawful." \* The spirit of Stephen, however, remained unsubdued. When Cyprian wrote to him, conveying the resolutions of the synod, he replied with great warmth and offended dignity. He indulged in unworthy abuse of the bishops who had been deputed to wait upon him as the representatives of the North African church, refused to see or speak with them, and forbade his church to receive them into their homes. Doubtless he thought that by this mode of procedure he could compel his opponents to surrender their faith to him. But he was mistaken. Stephen appealed to the authority of the ancient Romish traditions, and spoke against innovation. "It is you," Cyprian replied, "who are the innovator, by thus breaking up the unity of the church. Whence is this tradition? Is it deduced from the words of the Lord, and from the

\* Cyprian, ep. 71, ad Quintum.



authority of the gospels, or from the doctrine and the epistles of the apostles? Custom, which has crept in with some people, must not prevent truth from prevailing and triumphing; for custom without truth is nothing but antiquated error.”\* After this, Cyprian called together a more numerous council than before; to whom the whole matter was submitted afresh, and by whom the opinions of Stephen were again condemned.†

Such were the attempts of this period to push forward the pretensions of Rome. The spirit was there; but the power was wanting. A true prophet might have seen, even now, the elementary working of that fraudulent and despotic character which afterwards became incarnate in the persons, and co-ordinate with the prerogatives, of the bishops of Rome. The stripling ambition, although at present harmless, gave this early indication of what it might become when matured and clothed with political power.

From all that has been advanced it will now be apparent how great the change which had come over the original condition of the church in this second post-apostolic age. The principles of Independency were now to a great extent undermined, if not in many places wholly supplanted. Too often professedly Christian men gave up their individual rights and responsibilities at the bidding of their spiritual guides. Liberty of conscience became rare. Every doctrine or opinion which did not square in with that of the visible catholic church was branded with the name of heresy;

\* Cyprian, ep. 74.

† Neander's Hist. of the Christ. Religion, &c. vol. i. pp. 226—228, 368—371. Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 285, 286.

and although the value of toleration might have been learnt by the experience which Christians had passed through in seasons of persecution, they seemed to be less and less tolerant of one another's differences, the farther time rolled by. In addition to this, the congregations of Christians had now very little of that self-government which was originally in their hands. They permitted their ministers gradually to become their lords; and were deluded, under plea of union and order, into compliance with a system of synodical association which entangled every church in its meshes, and ultimately deprived them all of their constitutional rights. As the natural result of these changes, the clergy augmented their powers daily, and became possessed of that independence which was once the boast of those for whom their offices had been instituted. Their orders were multiplied both in the Greek and Latin churches. Besides metropolitans, bishops, presbyters, and deacons, there were sub-deacons, acolyths, exorcists, readers, and doorkeepers.\* Divine worship was in many things wholly corrupted from that simplicity which once characterized it. The ministry became proud and worldly, and the people formal. The simple service of the primitive Christians—who thought little of what was visible and outward, but much of what was spiritual and connected with the

\* The *sub-deacons* (*ὑποδιακονοι*) attended the deacons in the execution of their duties, as the *acolyths* (*ἀκολουθοι*) attended on the bishop. The *exorcists* (*exorcistæ*) performed prayer over those supposed to be possessed of evil spirits. The *readers* (*ἀναγινωσται*) publicly read the Scriptures and kept the copies used for that purpose. The *door-keepers* (*θυρωροι, πυλωροι, ostiarii*) kept the places of assembly clean, opened the doors, &c. The Greek church never adopted the acolyths and exorcists.—See Neander's Hist. vol. i. p. 206; Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 268.

thoughts and aspirations of the heart—became a matter of great show and pomp. During the first and second centuries no public edifices were erected expressly for Christian worship;\* neither in the third were there many buildings for exclusively religious ends.† In times of public opposition and persecution secrecy was desirable, and private rooms or workshops, and even the tombs, were the places of assembly and worship.‡ Towards the close of this age, however, as circumstances favoured, and the wealth of the bishops accumulated, splendid structures arose here and there, which vied with the Jewish synagogues, and even, in some instances, with the temples of the heathen; and at the same time the wealth of a church, which became every day more and more worldly, exhibited itself in internal decorations,§ vessels of gold and silver,|| and gorgeous ecclesiastical robes for the various orders of the clergy. The bishop ascended his throne, and the presbyters their chairs,

\* Even in Justin Martyr's time it was most common for Christians to meet in private houses. When asked by a magistrate "Where do you assemble?" his reply was, "Where each one can and will."

† At Edessa, it is said, a church-structure was erected A.D. 202. "In the third century the traces of buildings devoted exclusively to Christian worship became more frequent and obvious."—Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 272. See also Neander's Hist. of the Christ. Religion, vol. i. p. 329.

‡ Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. ii. part ii. chap. iv. sect. 8; Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. i. 273.

§ Mosheim, cent. iii. part ii. chap. iv. thinks it not improbable that images were used, which Gieseler doubts, Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 272; but which Neander approves, vol. i. p. 332.

|| Prudentius *Περὶ στεφαν.* Hymn II. referred to by Mosheim.

while the people humbly stood or kneeled around.\* Baptism became an imposing ceremonial, and was thought to have a regenerating power when duly administered either directly by successors of the apostles, or by those who acted under their direction and sanction.† Confirmation became necessary, in order to the validity of baptism when performed by inferior orders of the clergy or others.‡ The Lord's Supper, once a simple and humble service of memorial, in remembrance of Christ, whose death it showed forth or exhibited as the foundation-fact of Christianity, and the basis of every truly Christian hope; was completely altered in its character, and converted into a sacrifice, which Christian priests alone could consecrate and offer.§ Marriage was constituted a

\* The seats of the clergy were termed *cathedra* and *thrones* (*καθεδροι, θρονοι*). From the former term our word *cathedral* is derived.

† Gieseler, i. 277, mentions the preparations made for baptism, and the different classes through which candidates had to pass. See Neander, i. 363, for the effect of the notion of an "opus operatum" at this time prevalent.

‡ Such is the origin of confirmation. When the notion of the exclusively spiritual character of the bishops had been formed, it was supposed that they alone had the power of producing a real baptism of the spirit. Presbyters, however, and deacons might baptize. In order to make the practice of the church harmonize with the theory of the bishops' exclusive power, the rite of confirmation was introduced. "This idea," says Neander, "was fully formed as early as the middle of the third century. The bishops were, therefore, obliged at times to travel through their dioceses, in order to administer what was afterwards called *confirmation* to those who had been baptized by the parish priests—the clergy in the country.—Hist. of the Christian Religion, vol. i. p. 367.

§ In the time of Justin Martyr, and, later still, of Irenæus, this notion of a sacrifice in connexion with the material supper, had not

our brief statement. Neither have we, strictly speaking, carried the account of the long series of innovations up to the period embraced in the chronological heading of the present chapter. We have, however, approached it as nearly as is needful for so general a statement as that to which our space necessarily limits us. It is evident from what has been advanced, that this is the age in which most of the corruptions and changes, which affected the primitive institutions of Christianity, *originated*. It only remained for the church to take another step—if it could be done—in order to the complete subversion of the principles of Independency; namely, to ally itself to the secular power in such a manner as that it might become henceforth part and parcel of the kingdoms of this world.

Before we leave this age, however, it seems right to indicate the fact that *opposition* was frequently offered in various ways to the innovations which were introduced; and the further fact, that at present the appearance of popular, if not congregational power, was kept up in the election of ecclesiastical officers.

It was not likely that such grave changes as those especially the conclusion of this century, deserved the reprehensions of contemporary and succeeding writers. Some assumption of the ensigns of temporal dignity—the splendid throne, the sumptuous garments, the parade of external pomp—indicated a departure from apostolical simplicity; and a contentious ambition succeeded to the devoted humility of former days. And though we believe this evil to have been exaggerated by all the writers who have dwelt upon it, since the abuses we have noticed could scarcely be carried to violent excess by an order possessing no legally recognised rights or property; we may still be convinced, by the institution of certain inferior classes in the ministry, that the higher ranks had made some advances in luxurious indulgence."

which we have stated, could be effected without some differences of opinion, and occasionally some resistance. While piety and a love of peace and order might favour the introduction of official distinction between bishops and presbyters, the same spirit for a season preserved the distinction from becoming too much marked. It was not all at once that the president amongst the presbyters became a permanent office; it was not all at once that the permanent president became known exclusively by the name of bishop; it was not all at once that the bishop acquired a real independent authority over the presbyters and people. In the time of Irenæus (A.D. 177—192), the names are interchangeable.\* In the time of Tertullian (A.D. 245), the presbyters include the bishop as one of their number.† In the time of Cyprian (A.D. 258), the bishop never or seldom acted without the concurrence of his presbyters, in any matter of importance affecting the general interests of the church.‡ Cyprian himself asserts as much as this, and on one occasion apologized for having acted on his own independent authority in a case of emergency.§ Doubtless the reason for this gradual ope-

\* Irenæus, iv. 26.

† Apologet. cap. 39.

‡ Cyprian, ep. v. *A primordio episcopatus mei statui, nihil sine consilio vestro mea privatim sententia gerere. Sicut honor mutuus poscit, in commune tractabimus.* "In the commencement of my episcopate I determined to do nothing in carrying out my own private opinions without your agreement. As our mutual dignity demands, let us act in common."

§ When Cyprian, separated from his church by calamitous circumstances, named to church offices men of his neighbourhood who had distinguished themselves in a season of persecution, he apologized before both the laity and clergy for his arbitrary conduct,

ration of change was to be found in the resistance offered in the customs, if not spirit, of the Christian congregations. It would have been too much to expect them to part with their rights all at once. Even after this period there was one privilege which they would not yield—in many instances, at least—namely, that of electing their officers. While hierarchical distinctions were permitted to take place almost without opposition, the right of election was retained for many centuries, and was not taken away at last without much conflict and even bloodshed.\*

On account of the operation of the same spirit of resistance to innovation, it is difficult to ascertain the precise period when the independent power of the congregation was completely subverted and absorbed by synodical and diocesan authority. It is certain

and refers to his usual practice in the following terms: "We are accustomed to call you together to consult previously to the consecration to spiritual offices, and to weigh the character and merits of all in a general consultation."—Ep. xviii. quoted by Neander, *Hist. of the Christian Religion*, vol. i. p. 201.

\* "In regard to the election into church offices the old principle was constantly abided by, that the consent of the church was required to ratify such an election, and that the church was at liberty to bring forward objections against it. That principle was recognised in the appointment of the episcopal office; it was the prevailing custom in the third century, and Cyprian deduced it from apostolic tradition, that the bishops of the province, with the clergy of the vacant church, made the choice in the presence of the congregation. Cyprian ascribed to the church the right of choosing worthy bishops, or rejecting unworthy ones."—Neander's *Hist. &c.* vol. i. p. 203, 204. "So late as in the tenth century, an infringement of the claims of the people on the vacancy of a bishopric, was sometimes enough to occasion a civil war."—*Vaughan's Life of Wycliffe*, vol. i. p. 6, note 7, supported by testimonies.

that even so late as the fourth century there were, in *some* churches, congregational officers quite distinct from the bishop and presbyters of the diocese—remains of a former state of things, and indications of the change which had been effected.\* As some trees retain the old and withered leaves of the last year's growth after the new leaves of this have made their appearance—as the broken columns and ruined monuments erected by a former generation are often seen side by side with the modern structures of a present—so the old congregational officers of the apostolic and next succeeding age remained, even so late as the fourth century, to remind the church of the progress of innovation and decay. It is evident, also, from such facts as these, that congregational rights were not directly

\* In the North African churches, at the beginning of the fourth century, there were a class of leaders of the church under the name of elders of the people, "*seniores plebis*," who were expressly distinguished from the clerical body, and yet were considered as ecclesiastical persons (*personæ ecclesiasticæ*), who were representatives of the congregation. They were consulted by the clergy in matters of interest affecting the congregation, and they spoke in the name of the congregation when any complaint was to be made against the clergy. According to the letter of a Numidian bishop, Purpurius, *nothing could be done without their consent*. "*Sine consilio seniorum nihil agebatur*." Neander regards this as a remnant of the old congregational system which had not been done away with by the introduction of another system. In reply to those who think it an arrangement of a late period in the history of the church, borrowed from the civil forms of municipal government, he says, "It is far more probable of itself that this regulation should have been retained as a remnant of a freer spirit of church government, and propagated with some change in its circumstances."—Neander's *Hist. &c.* vol. i. p. 205, 206. In erecting the new ecclesiastical structure, the North Africans forgot to remove the foundations of the old!



subverted from within, but by means of a gradually increasing synodical power, which drew all the churches of a district or province together; first in friendly union, then into nearer association, and after that into catholicity of system and supervision; until at last the several independent parts became a united whole under one general head of rule and government. As the stars were once thought to have been formed out of nebulæ moving round upon a centre, and compressed by the action of centripetal and centrifugal forces, which ultimately gave form and unity to that which once floated loose and free as a vast aggregate of almost independent particles of matter; so the churches of Christ in the several provinces were gradually brought out of their independent state into one of subordination and oneness, by the action of synodical power on the one hand, and episcopal on the other.

We have already adverted to the opposition offered to the early institution of provincial synods.\* They have been regarded by some as exercising a beneficial influence in respect to the temporal position of the Christian church. Unquestionably, confederation for the purpose of resisting unlawful aggression on the part of the civic power or the populace, would have been neither unscriptural nor harmful, if that resistance had been simply moral, and if confederation had terminated upon that object. The apostle of the Gentiles could say with all consistency, "Is it lawful to beat a Roman, and uncondemned?"—could carry his appeal to Cæsar, awaiting the issues of a legal tribunal in a Christian spirit. And if *he* could do so,

\* See back, p. 219.

Christians in general are not forbidden by the gospel of Paul to strengthen one another's hands against unlawful procedures, whether on the part of governors and magistrates, or the rabble. But the confederation to which reference is now made did not terminate here. It did not leave the confederate parties independent. It became a new framework of ecclesiastical government.\* While strengthening the churches in their relation to the world, it weakened them in their relation to one another. While throwing up a means of defence against the outward foe, it suppressed the freedom of action within. The very walls which excluded the invader, enclosed the citizens within a narrower circle of operations, and brought them into a manageable compass for the purposes of official despotism.† Great as may have been the ambition of the episcopal order, we question whether their power would ever have increased to those dimensions which have made the very name of bishop the symbol of rapacity and spiritual lordship, if it had not been fostered by the synodical confederations in the midst of which it first arose.‡

It is not wonderful, then, that the people in many instances resisted the growth of this new authority over their liberties, so soon as they came to under-

\* "At last the participation of the churches was entirely excluded from these synods, and at length the bishops alone decided every thing in them."—Neander's Hist. &c. vol. i. p. 214.

† "The provincial synods were serviceable towards setting distant parts of the church in connexion with each other, and maintaining that connexion."—Ibid.

‡ "By means of their connexion with each other in these synods, their power (i. e. of the bishops) was constantly on the increase."—Ibid. Also Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 171.

stand its real character. The multiplication of sects and heresies in the third century \* was the evidence and fruit of this resistance. In many cases, probably, men were driven to extreme views and apparently schismatic conduct by the very means used to bring about unity. It is the nature of force, when used to procure agreement in matters of opinion, to divide instead of uniting—to drive men from one another into factions, the most powerful of which generally acquires the name of the orthodox party, while all the rest are heterodox and heretic.† It frequently happens, moreover, as in this case, that those who triumph over their opponents by the use of these unhallowed means, have the advantage of handing down to posterity their own opinions, and of aspersing those which they once formally condemned. If many of those sects, as they are termed, had been permitted to transmit their *own* account of their opinions and practices on the page of history, it is more than probable that the judgment of modern times would have reversed that of their catholic traducers; and we should have learnt to weep over the oppression to which they were subjected when living, instead of being misled by the defamation which has dishonoured them

\* Neander's Hist. &c. vol. i. p. 237; Waddington's Hist. of the Church, chap. v.; Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. iii. part ii. chap. v.

† Mosheim has a section headed "The vicious methods of controversy now employed." The third century was the age of pious frauds for the purpose of deceiving the heathen and suppressing Christian liberty. The *canons* called apostolical, the *apostolical constitutions*, the *Clementines*, &c. were palmed off on the church now, in support of the catholic doctrines and episcopal power. See Gieseier, Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 206—211. See Appendix C.


when dead.\* The broken rays of light which steal in upon us through the darkness of past centuries, are sufficient to show that, as in modern times, so in this age of innovation, there were *puritans*, branded by that name, which has so often been used as a term of reproach against the friends of simplicity and truth.† The very name, however, serves to embalm their memory, and is in itself an indication of existing heresy and corruption amongst those who used it.

“In the first ages of the church,” is the language of a modern preacher, “the name of Christian was identical with all that could elevate and ennoble. It signified no faint convictions, no questionable motives, no equivocal condition. The zeal it spoke of was an inextinguishable flame; the hope it argued, an anchor immovable before the rudest tempest. The joys of which it was the symbol were as life amidst the dead; the charity it signalized warm as maternal tenderness, and gentle as the dews of heaven. No danger could alarm, no opposition quell, that spirit of active beneficence it was known to indicate. The fury of the persecutor, and the derision of the scorner, were alike powerless before it. He who possessed it, stood, composed and dauntless, against the combined

\* Waddington admits that the charges made against the early heretics should be received with great caution; because their own answers are lost, and because they are not substantiated by any authentic records. *Hist. of the Church*, p. 59.

† The Novatians were called Puritans (*καθαροί*) because for a long time they contended for a primitive purity and simplicity of church discipline.—Gieseler, i. 284, 285; Neander, i. 255—268. Waddington seems to sympathize with those who with Cyprian considered them fanatics. Of course they were so, if they thought, as they did, of restoring apostolic discipline in a corrupt age and church.

assaults of calumny and outrage, and of earth and hell. As if a shield of adamant were stretched above his head,—as if a buckler of triple brass begirt his bosom,—he was insensible to weakness, and incapable of fear. He might fall; but he could not fly. He might perish; but he could not yield. His blood might be spilt upon the ground; but his hope could not waver, nor his honour be trampled in the dust. You might crush his limbs with torture,—his affections with solitude,—his name with infamy, and his freedom with the dungeon and the chain; but he bore within him an imperishable principle, which you could not crush nor impair—it was the energy and power of *faith*. And this, like electric fire, acquired force by resistance, and intensity by repression; and borrowed increase of splendour from surrounding gloom. The sun might have been staid in his career, and the stars have failed from their course; the moon might have forgotten her brightness, and the tides of the ocean their return; the fragrantcy of spring might have departed, and the fruitfulness of summer sickened, and the blast of wintry desolation swept and deformed the year; all earthly light might have faded, and all joy and beauty withered and passed away; but this living flame could never languish—this ethereal spirit never could expire. Here was the fragment of a new creation,—the germ and rudiment of a yet unfashioned world—infolding in itself the embryo of that last form of perfected existence in which the great Parent Mind would finally enshrine the revelations of his power and glory. It possessed a depth of essence, and a plenitude of being, fitted to survive convulsion, and to foster decay. It could only waste with the waste of that eternal spring from whence it was de-



rived, and hence subsisted in perennial fulness, and poured its renewing influences with an unfailing stream.

“Christianity was then the religion of heroes,—of saints, apostles, and martyrs. It belonged to them ‘of whom the world was not worthy.’ It transformed all it touched into its own celestial likeness; enduing its subjects, of whatever age or condition, with an inflexible constancy, and an exhaustless ardour, before which the virtues of the patriot or the warrior were beheld with diminished lustre, and dwindled into ordinary things. To be a Christian then was to hold fellowship with uncreated wisdom; to drink of the fountain of primeval purity; and to breathe the soul of a philanthropy as unquenchable as it was unrestrained. It was to tread in the footsteps of Jesus, and to partake the mind of God. The pity with which a Christian then was animated, was the same that wept in Gethsemane and bled in Golgotha. The sanctity with which he was arrayed was in essence that of Him who was ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.’ The fervour which impelled him had once looked on dissolution in its most hideous form, and said, ‘I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!’ The energy which bore him onward was no other than that which made death vital, and mortal agony the source of endless beatitude, as it lighted the features and gleamed from the eye, which were now dimmed, and shrouded, and closing, on the cross.

“Such was a Christian then; and has that solemn designation declined in any measure from the import which it once included? Has it come to signify a less exalted character, either of sentiment or obligation?

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE THIRD POST-APOSTOLIC AGE ; OR THE AGE OF SUBVERSION.

[ A. D. 324—1073. ]

IN the last chapter we saw how the first two principles of Independency were affected by the innovations of the second and third century. We have now to show how the third principle was affected by the changes which succeeding centuries brought to light. Up to this time we have seen the church undergoing a great and visible alteration ; falling away in spirit from the primitive pattern, and becoming more and more assimilated to the kingdoms of this world. As yet, however, the opportunity has not presented itself for forming an alliance with, much less for wielding the actual power of, an earthly political government. In many seasons of the church's early history, we behold her suffering, lacerated, bleeding, under the fang of persecution ; and only now and then favoured with a short respite from the tenacious pursuit of her enemies. Towards the close of the third century, however, and at the commencement of the fourth, the civil power began to take a different view of the new religion and its abettors. Christians had become too numerous, and their influence too great, to be treated with absolute contempt. They were therefore either feared or favoured ; either punished with the utmost severity, or patronized. In the time of Septimius *Severus*, much suffering was endured from popular

rage and the avarice of the governors ; more especially after the emperor had forbidden the adoption of Christianity in A.D. 203. Under Caracalla, Elagabalus, and Severus Alexander, (A.D. 211—235) these persecutions ceased. Maximin, the Thracian, either excited or sanctioned a new burst of persecution against both the Christian clergy and the Christian people. In the time of Gordian, and Philip the Arabian, the storm subsided for a period of about eleven years ; after which Decius and Gallus, with fearful vengeance, directed their worldly power against the professors of the Christian faith. Valerian took a little breathing time ; but afterwards renewed the persecution. Gallienus was the first to put a stop to it by a law of toleration, in A.D. 261 ; and although Aurelian and Galerius had it at heart to follow in the footsteps of their persecuting predecessors, little injustice was done to the Christians during a long period. In A.D. 303, Diocletian, moved by superstition and the persuasions of the enemies of the Christian faith, caused the church in Nicomedia to be destroyed, and issued four edicts in succession against the Christians, the object of which was their utter extermination. Seldom or never had a more violent persecution been set on foot ; and martyrs and apostates were alike abundant. This storm continued, with different degrees of violence, in the various provinces of the Roman empire, until (A.D. 312) Constantine becoming sole lord of the West, issued, in conjunction with Licinius, ruler of the European East, an edict of universal toleration, followed the next year by a particular edict in favour of the Christians. This edict was issued from Milan, and soon after became valid over the whole Roman empire. From



this period the Christians were favoured, and even patronised ; and in A.D. 324, after obtaining a victory over Licinius his competitor, Constantine openly professed the Christian faith.

From this period the third post-apostolic age begins. Henceforth, with little exception, the position of the Christian church in relation to the empire, was entirely changed. The Christians were favoured in every possible way ; assistance was rendered to them in the erection of churches, sometimes of the most splendid character, and in furnishing their revenues out of the common fund of the cities. The seat of government was transferred from Rome to Byzantium, afterwards called Constantinople ; the highest offices of state, and inferior posts of honour, were open to Christians ; the revenues of heathen temples were converted to the use of Christian churches ; and paganism, in its turn, occupied the position of obloquy and persecution which Christianity had once sustained. Although the actual relations between the church and the state were not legally defined, Christianity became from this time the established religion of the Roman empire. In the year A.D. 350, when the whole empire devolved on Constantius, all sacrifices were prohibited for the first time, on pain of death ; and heathenism was obliged to conceal itself in the country, and in corners remote from observation. During the reign of Julian the Apostate, a short season of reverse happened to the Christians, in which their privileges were taken from them, and they were forbidden to appear as public teachers in the schools of literature (A.D. 361—363). His successors, Jovian, Valentinian, Valens, Gratian, and Valentinian the Second, adopted the policy of the Constantines ; and Theo-

dosius the Great waged war in many a bloody contest against the paganism of the east. In A.D. 392, he forbade all kinds of idolatry by the most severe punishments; two years after, interdicted sacrifices in the most practical of all methods, namely, by refusing to defray their costs out of the imperial purse; and even called upon the senate to declare themselves in favour of Christianity. Although in various parts of the world the spirit of persecution still manifested itself, as it has done in every age, from this time we find a close connexion existing between the professors of the Christian faith and the empire.\* It now devolves upon us to notice the effect produced on the constitution and organization of the church by this greatly altered state of things.

The direct tendency of the patronage now extended to Christian professors, was to augment their numbers, comfort, respectability, and wealth. The religion of Jesus became for the first time a fashionable religion. No longer held in contempt by magistrates and rulers, no longer excluded from temples and courts, no longer proscribed by legal enactments, but, favoured and fostered by the hand of power, it proceeded on a march of easy conquest, and won its way amongst all classes. It need scarcely be said, that its progress was not "pure and undefiled." While professors abounded, the faithful were but few. The name had been changed; those who were once "heathens" were now "Christians;" but the formality remained. The general result

\* See Gieseler's *Ecc. Hist.*, vol. i. pp. 191-198, 316-327, for a succinct and accurate account of the various fortunes of the church in the times of the Roman emperors. The above facts are mainly derived from him. For a more full account, see Neander's *Hist.* i. 80-160.

was an increase of corruption in the church at large, while its officers and instructors became to a great degree mere worldly functionaries in the performance of sacred duties. Thus the way was prepared for any alterations in the constitution of the church which future circumstances might dictate. If in past times the transition from primitive modes of worship and institutions had been too easy and rapid, much more so was this the case now.

Besides this, the relation into which the church was brought with the civil power, gradually altered the whole complexion of its constitution. While, on the one hand, all religious parties greedily sought after patronage, that party which had assumed to itself the name "catholic church," made exclusive pretensions to the privilege; and in consequence the emperor was virtually called upon to decide which was *the* church, and what doctrines and institutions were those of a genuine Christianity. He therefore assumed the supreme power over the sacred body, together with the right of governing it as he thought fit. No opposition was offered; the church was prepared to become subordinate to imperial power for the sake of imperial patronage. Councils were established by the authority of the emperor; representatives from all the churches in the Christian world were gathered together, under an imperial presidency, to determine all matters of faith and practice; and thus that community which ought to have been separate from the world, as the meek and modest spouse of Christ, became visibly, and without any manifestation of shame, the adulterous handmaid of the state.\*

\* "To put an end to division, the emperors called *general*

Thus the principle of *aggregate* Independency was completely subverted, and the other principles of Independency more and more. No longer were the congregations of faithful men independent republics, having power to manage their own religious affairs. No longer were Christians taught to regard the word of God as the only standard of appeal, in all matters affecting faith, conscience, and religious duty. No longer were the ministers of religion ministers of Christ alone, and servants of the churches. No longer was there the exhibition of an union between Christians and Christian churches, on the basis of a simple charity, and on terms of perfect confidence and good will. All was changed. Instead of the word, were the decisions of œcumenical or universal councils. Instead of congregational self-government, there was monarchical power exercised by the *bishops* in each diocese, in conjunction with *metropolitan* power in each province, and *patriarchal* power in each large division of the Christian world; while all was kept in a state of subordination to the *imperial* power, by means of the œcumenical or general council. Offices were multiplied; the possessions of the church increased; as much of uniformity prevailed as was compatible with the smallest degree of liberty; the grand idea, which had been revolved only in visions and in dreams by the ambitious ecclesiastics of the second and third centuries, was now realized; and a *visible*

*councils* (σύνοδοι οἰκουμενικαί), elevated their decisions into laws of the realm, and applied worldly power to enforce them universally." Gieseler i. 329. Constantine called the *first* universal or œcumenical council at Nice in A. D. 325.

catholic church was everywhere settling itself down on the foundations of a political supremacy.

It is interesting to notice the circumstance that, even at this period, there were not wanting those who deeply felt the corruptions of the age, and sighed for a former state of things. A sect—so called by those who had power enough to give such a name to all who differed from them—existed at this period, whose principles were those of primitive Independency. “About this time,” says Mosheim,\* “Ærius, a presbyter monk and semi-Arian, erected a new sect, and excited divisions throughout Armenia, Pontus, and Cappadocia, by propagating opinions different from those that were commonly received. One of his principal tenets was, that bishops were not distinguished from presbyters by any divine right: but that, according to the institution of the New Testament, their offices and authority were absolutely the same. How far Ærius pursued this opinion, through its natural consequences, is not certainly known; but we know, with the utmost certainty, that it was highly agreeable to many good Christians, who were no longer able to bear the tyranny and arrogance of the bishops of this century. There were other things in which Ærius differed from the common notions of the time; he condemned prayers for the dead, stated fasts, the celebration of Easter and other rites of that nature, in which the multitude erroneously imagine that the life and soul of religion consists. His great purpose seems to have been that of reducing Christianity to its primitive simplicity; a purpose, indeed, laudable

\* Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. iv. part ii. chap. iii.

and noble when considered in itself, though the principles from whence it springs, and the means by which it is executed, are generally, in many respects, worthy of censure, and may have been so in the case of this reformer." Such is the statement of Mosheim. Others have mentioned the name of Ærius amongst the heretics and schismatics of that day. It is evident, however, even from the testimony of enemies (for such testimony alone has reached us), that the principles of this sect were too pure and scriptural to flourish in an age of such abounding corruption.

About the same period, some amongst the reputed orthodox, winking at corruption, and remaining in connexion with a hierarchical system, were conscientiously compelled to remonstrate against the headlong progress of the church into worldly connexions and changes; and the voice of one, in particular, has reached us, as a proof at once of the felt corruptions of the times, and of the correctness of the principles which the Ærian Independents of that day maintained. Such a man as Jerome, or rather Hieronymus, would not have expressed himself so strongly as he has done in reference to the primitive and apostolic government of the church, in contrast with the customs of his time, if there had not been a pretty general diffusion of similar sentiments on the subject. "Among the ancients," he says in his commentary on the *Epistle to Titus*, "presbyters and bishops were the very same; but by little and little, in order that the plants of dissension might be plucked up, the whole management was intrusted to one individual. As the presbyters, therefore, *know* that they are subjected to him who was their president, *by the custom of the church*; so the bishops know that they are greater

than the presbyters, more *by custom* than by the principle of *any appointment of Christ*." \*

It is refreshing to hear such a voice as this in the midst of so much error and unscriptural formalism. It was not possible, however, for the truth to prevail in a church which had deliberately substituted human opinions and practices for the revealed doctrines and institutions of the gospel. Step by step, therefore, the work of subversion went on. For a long period the bishop of Constantinople, and the bishop of Rome, who were the most eminent amongst the bishop-patriarchs of the period, contended with one another for superiority of power, and supremacy over the rest. The influence of the former was, for a season, so augmented by the resources of the imperial government at Constantinople, as practically to predominate. But, in consequence of various circumstances too numerous to mention, Rome was enabled to gain the lost ground, and came off in the end triumphant.

For a long time, however, this supremacy was only nominal in some of the provinces of Christendom. The Britons and Scots, the churches of Gaul and Spain, and even of Italy to some extent, resisted the pretensions of Rome. Previous to this, a wide-spread sentiment of disgust had been created by the ambition and the usurpations, the rapacity and the worse vices, of the so-called successors of St. Peter. A schism, in feeling, had already been created between the eastern and western churches; and if favouring circumstances had permitted, the yoke of domination, which was becoming unbearable, would have been thrown off by

\* Hieron, Comm. in Tit. i. 1. See Mason on Episcopacy, edited by the Rev. J. Blackburn, chap. ix.; also Gieseler, i. 443, note 38.

many who were in close connexion with the church of Rome. But it was apparently an inevitable thing that the ecclesiastical supremacy of "anti-Christ" should grow and prevail, in order to teach the nations of Europe, by painful experience, the folly of departing from Scripture in matters of religion. Everything seemed to be converted into a means of aggrandizing the Roman power. The invasion of the barbarians of the North, which weakened and ultimately destroyed the empire, paved the way for the further advances of the popedom.\* The superstitious hordes were a prepared people; and Rome was cunning enough to know how they might be converted into friends. She became "all things to all men," in a sense never intended by the apostles of the Gentiles. The greatness of her terror at the time of the invasion of the barbarian chiefs was only equalled by the greatness of her craft afterwards. She meekly suffered what could not be avoided; soothed down the angry passions of the invaders, by splendid spectacles suited to impose upon the imagination of the uncivilized; asserted her independence and complete separation from all civil power; took their vices under a moderate system of regulation, which checked their progress, while it did not alter their enormity; and in the end received blind submission, where at first she had feared complete destruction. The influence of the monks, also, who had now become very numerous, was almost wholly exercised in favour of the Roman bishop. This was only a natural exchange of friendly offices. The monks found favour at Rome against the subordinate bishops, in the neighbourhood of whose jurisdiction they might

\* Guizot's *Hist. of Civilization*, European Lib. vol. i. p. 99.



happen to live ; and regarding the power of the pope as almost pledged on their behalf, they made his cause their own, and represented him as a sort of God to the multitude, over whom they had acquired a great influence.\*

In this way the power of Rome grew among the masses of the people, whilst the apparent gentleness and the undoubted tact of some of the popes procured friends of an unexpected character. Gregory the Great,† in the sixth century, wielded the crozier with consummate ability, and augmented the spiritual powers connected with his see to a large extent. The very spirit of Roman policy seemed to be incarnate in this man, and to have been confirmed by him in its leading characteristics at the same time. ‡ All possible contradictions met in his person. Obsequious and haughty, conciliating and obstinate, benevolent and

\* The monastic system took root in the fourth and fifth centuries. Basil, in A.D. 360, first established the monastic vow. The general spread of the system was contemporaneous with the barbarian conquests. The Basilian and Benedictine monks were the principal orders of this period.—Waddington's *Hist. of the Church*, chap. xix.

† Gregory's character has been the subject of much discussion. Gibbon has drawn a fine portraiture in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. xlv. Jortin says, "He was an ambitious, insolent prelate under the mask of humility!"—*Remarks*, vol. iv. p. 403. England has reason to remember Gregory, inasmuch as he sent over Augustine, with forty monks, in A.D. 596, who is said to have converted Ethelbert, and who certainly became the first archbishop of Canterbury and primate of the British church. By this means England became involved in popery ; and but for this a pure faith might have prevailed, as it did in many parts of Britain long before the mission of St. Austin.

‡ The character of the man is illustrated by the following anecdote :—A schismatic, named Stephanus, came to Rome, and offered

selfish, as his designs might appear to determine, he acquired a personal and official influence never possessed before, and seldom transcended afterwards. He felt his way cautiously, and enlarged the spiritual dominions of Rome to an incredible extent almost before men were aware of it, until he became in reality a temporal sovereign, only without the name. His ambassadors, under the name of "legates," were received at every court with all respect; and by a skilful manœuvre he so managed it, that none could be elevated to the distinctions of metropolitan episcopal power, without receiving his sanction and swearing fealty to Rome.\* He was also the first to claim the power of the keys for the successor of St. Peter; inculcated the doctrine of purgatory, pilgrimage, and the sanctity of relics; instituted the canon of the mass; and added all possible splendour to the ceremonies of the church.

Meanwhile the power of the emperors visibly decayed. One usurpation after another divided and weakened it. The ancient city, associated for so many ages with the images of greatness, stood out in yet bolder relief than before, in consequence of the fading glory of the dismembered empire; and was all the more safe from peril because of its supposed sacredness as the seat of spiritual dominion.

To return to the church, if Gregory would take upon himself the risk of his soul, and guarantee that his return should be sanctioned in heaven. Gregory undertook this, without hesitation! Baronius, *Annals*, 500, sect. 26.

\* This was by means of the *pallium*, or vest,—a mere article of dress, which was sent to the metropolitans approved of by Rome, without which they were not to ordain bishops. By this artifice it came to pass that the metropolitans found it needful to repair to Rome to receive the *pallium*, and ultimately to swear fidelity, before they could have it.

After this (A. D. 610), Boniface the Third persuaded the tyrannical Phocas to take from the bishop of Constantinople the title of *œcumenical*, or universal bishop, and bestow it on the Roman pontiff: and thus a *nominal* priority and supremacy was acquired. It is in keeping with the pretensions of Rome, then and in subsequent periods, that this pre-eminence should have been conferred by one of the most odious, blood-thirsty, abominable tyrants that ever disgraced the page of history.\*

It would be useless to crowd our pages with a mere list of those events which happened between this period and the age of Hildebrand. We propose, therefore, only to state such matters as greatly affected the constitution of the church during this age of increasing change and subversion.

In the seventh and eighth centuries, we discern the operation of remarkable causes, leading to a great accession of power on the part of the Roman pontiff. The barbarous nations who had avowedly received the gospel, were instructed in so feeble and imperfect a manner as to transfer their former religious notions to the religion which they had embraced; and as there was nothing in the character or teaching of the bishops and other orders of the church that served to correct the idea, they came to consider them only as a new class of priests, identical with those to whom they had been previously subject. The bishop of Rome reaped all the advantage arising from this perverted view of things. He was regarded with an excessive and servile veneration; and received all the honours which had formerly been

\* Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. vii. part ii. chap. ii.

rendered to the arch-druid of the barbarian worship. Thus his authority over his new spiritual subjects was boundless; and, instead of checking the spirit engendered by ignorance and superstition, he endeavoured to strengthen and foster it in every possible way.\* Hence the arrogant and despotic temper which from this time began to characterize the Roman druid. Hence the pernicious opinion, that those whom he excommunicated forfeited not only their civil rights, but the common privileges of humanity. Hence, ultimately, the growth of that spirit of war in the bosom of the church, which converted the temple of peace and love into an arena of sanguinary conflict and a theatre of desolations.

Other circumstances transpired, in the course of the last of these centuries, tending to the future stability and progress of the Roman domination. In A.D. 751, Pepin of France having assembled the states of the realm for the purpose of procuring a formal title to the honours of majesty, which he had usurped by the deposition of his sovereign, determined to consult the Bishop of Rome respecting the lawfulness of his conduct. The question transmitted by Pepin to Zachary, the then pontiff, was "Whether the Divine law permitted a valiant and warlike people to dethrone a timid and indolent monarch, and to substitute in his place one more worthy?" The pretended successor of St. Peter had now a favourable opportunity for showing that his jurisdiction was spiritual only, and did not permit him to decide a question so entirely political. But he was in need of assistance against the Greeks and Lombards; and therefore returned a

\* Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. viii. part ii. chap. ii.

favourable answer, in order to secure the friendship of the Franks. Nor was he unrewarded. From this period a strong bond of attachment was formed between the kings of France and the Roman see. In A.D. 754, Pepin advanced to the aid of Stephen the Second, the successor of Zachary, at the head of a numerous army; defeated Aistulphus and the Lombards, compelling them to deliver up to the see of Rome the exarchate of Ravenna, Pentapolis, and all the cities, castles, and territories which had been taken from the Roman dukedom; and in the next year, by a special grant, conferred the exarchate of Ravenna and Pentapolis upon the Roman pontiff and his successors. Thus the bishop of Rome became, in *fact*, a temporal prince. In A.D. 774, Charlemagne, the son of Pepin, again came to the assistance of Rome against the Lombards, overturned their empire, banished their monarch, proclaimed himself king, and not only confirmed the grants made by his father, but added several cities and provinces in Italy, which had not been included in it. In A.D. 800, the same emperor, seizing a favourable opportunity, set out for Rome, and managed to have himself proclaimed the sovereign of the West. And now the policy of Zachary's answer to the question of Pepin became very observable. But for the friendship which it cemented between France and Rome, the latter would by this time have probably absorbed the jurisdiction of the pontiff. As it was, Charlemagne reserved for himself the supreme dominion only, and even granted to the church of Rome, at the suggestion of its ambitious head, the real jurisdiction over that city and its annexed territory. Thus the power of the Roman pontiffs became greatly consolidated. From time to

time, however, it was rendered palpable enough, that the Roman bishopric was subordinate to the emperors. In some instances, the choice of the successor of St. Peter was determined by the sovereign ; neither was he for a long period absolutely independent of the secular power.

Generally speaking, the character of the popes from this period was anything but such as became the professed heads of a large religious body ; and of some it may be said, that their very names pollute the page of history. Such were the arts and intrigues practised at times, in order to obtain the Roman episcopate, that it is little to be wondered at that the successors of St. Peter should be so generally corrupt.

In the ninth century, an event is said to have happened which interrupted the pure and even flow of this much vaunted succession. Between the pontificate of Leo the Fourth, who died A.D. 855, and Benedict the Third, a certain woman, disguising her sex, made good her way to the papal chair, and sustained the dignity and honours of the Roman pontificate during about two years. This extraordinary person is generally known by the title of Pope Joan. Some have disputed the fact ; but, until the Reformation, it was neither considered incredible in itself, nor ignominious to the character of the church. In modern times, the advocates of the papacy have endeavoured, naturally enough, to throw discredit upon a portion of the papal history, so startling and so unwelcome.

Shortly after this time, an event of another kind happened, which augmented the power of the Roman see, and was attended with results affecting the future

progress of the popedom. After the death of Louis the Second, surnamed the Meek, a fierce war broke out between his sons, each of whom contended for the empire. John the Eighth, at this time the Roman pontiff, eagerly seized the opportunity, in conjunction with the Italian princes, of nominating the successor to the imperial throne. Whether the pope was chosen as umpire by the competitors, or not, is doubtful. Charles the Bald, however, by means of rich presents and richer promises, secured the favour of Rome, and was proclaimed King of Italy, while Carloman and Charles the Gross were appointed his successors. Thus the pontiff became the arbiter of crowned heads, and the bishopric of Rome became a sovereignty co-ordinate with, and in certain seasons superior to, the court of the empire. Elated with their prosperity, the Roman bishops now sought to magnify their office in its spiritual department; giving it out that they were appointed by Jesus Christ supreme legislators in the church universal, from whom all other bishops derived their authority, and without whose consent not even the councils could determine anything. In order to support these new pretensions, forged memorials, purporting to be those of primitive times, amongst which were the famous Decretal Epistles, were palmed off upon the credulous world; and although some of the Latin, and more particularly the French, bishops protested against the reception of these fictitious documents amongst the laws of the church, they accomplished their purpose effectually, through the perseverance and determination of the pontiffs. The mystery of iniquity was now more visibly at work than ever.

Rome was determined to obtain complete mastery, either by fair means or foul, and was in the end only too successful.

The chief rival of Rome, and the only check in the way of her spiritual supremacy, was Constantinople. For a long time a spirit of jealousy and animosity had prevailed between the two bishoprics, which, in the ninth century, broke out into an open rupture. Photius, who had been chosen patriarch of Constantinople, A.D. 858, by the Emperor Michael, was excommunicated by the Roman pontiff, Nicolas the First, in a council assembled at Rome A.D. 862. This was at the instance of Ignatius, the predecessor of Photius, who had been deposed from the patriarchate by Michael. Ignatius, probably, had some right on his side, as matters then went; but the Roman pontiff, in excommunicating his successor, was moved by private resentment and malice, more than by a sense of justice. Photius, however, treated the decree of excommunication with contempt; returned it in kind; and, in a council assembled at Constantinople, A.D., 866, declared Nicolas unworthy of his position in the church, and of being admitted to the communion of Christians.

Thus a schism was brought about between the churches of the East and West, more dire than any that had happened before, although such things were of frequent occurrence.\* From this time the two churches were always at enmity with one another, until in A.D. 1054, their separation was consummated

\* Long before this a tripartite schism had occurred in consequence of the discussions and differences of opinion respecting the person of Christ, by means of which the church was divided into three parties—the Greeks, Latins, and Jacobites.



in a schism never again to be healed. Leo the Ninth was then pope, and Michael Cerularius, the patriarch of Constantinople. As far as the spirit of the two prelates is concerned, there was little to choose between them. The haughty arrogance of Rome, however, is illustrated by the circumstance that her legates publicly excommunicated the patriarch and his adherents in the church of St. Sophia, in the very heart of Constantinople itself. Leaving the written act of anathema upon the grand altar of that temple, they afterwards shook off the dust from their feet and departed. At the same time, the resentment of the Grecian patriarch was exhibited in an act of similar import. He excommunicated, in his turn, the legates and all their followers in a public council, and obtained permission from the emperor to burn the act of excommunication which had been pronounced against the Greeks.\*

Such was the state of things in reference to the highest authorities in the nominal and divided church of Christ, at the termination of this age. It may easily be inferred that the condition of the subordinate and inferior orders was not less melancholy. The bishops universally were guilty of the grossest acts of rapacity and oppression. The clergy were as corrupted and degraded as it was possible for men occupying their station to be. Swarms of monks infested every country, and fleeced the people by a wholesale system of insolent mendicancy. The masses of the people were in a worse condition than they would probably

\* Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. xi. part ii. chap. iii.; Waddington's Hist. of the Church, chap. xii.

have been, had the church never taken them under its spiritual care. The ignorance of barbarism would undoubtedly have been better for them, both as to time and eternity, than the kind and amount of enlightenment which they possessed—an enlightenment respecting the vices, selfishness, and ambition of their spiritual rulers. It was as if the spirits of darkness had become incarnate for a season, to occupy all, or nearly all, the offices in the church of Christ, discharging the mere functions and duties of a nominal religion with a view to the subjugation of universal liberty, and the pollution of the souls of men.

Truly this age is one in which we behold a complete subversion of all the original institutions of Christianity. The Bible became a sealed book; and the doctrines of the Bible were altogether eclipsed, at first by the inventions of philosophy, then by views of priestly and sacramental efficacy, and after, or rather in conjunction with these, by scholastic subtleties and corrupt practices. The brotherhood of Christ—the fellowship of the saints—the church of the living God—sustained by the individual faith of all the members, united in the bonds of a genuine love, and animated by the spirit of obedience to God and compassion to man, was no where to be found; unless, as in the days of Elijah, there were the “hidden ones,” secluded from public notice in the fastnesses of their mountain homes, and preserved by the providence of God as the Waldenses, Cathari, and Puritans of an early age. The ministers of Christ and servants of the churches, appointed to feed the flock with meekness and a simple love of truth, were a rare class of men. In their stead were so many

masters, lording it over God's heritage, or assuming their right to do so, wherever such heritage might exist. The kingdom which is "not of this world," appeared no longer to have place in this world. The most visible thing on earth, and the most palpable, too, was the professed church of Christ. So visible was it, that its rulers had princely vestments, titles, thrones, palaces, sceptres, and empire. So palpable was it, that, in opposition to the example of Christ, it bade its "servants fight," not merely for purposes of defence, but in furtherance of the designs of supremacy and aggrandizement. The sword of the Spirit rusted in neglect, while the sword of steel flashed in the eyes of the enemies of the popedom. The weapons that were "not carnal, but spiritual," were weapons that had fallen into long disuse; while all the instruments of secular power were put into active requisition, in pursuit of the aims of a worldly hierarchy. Sanguinary crusades, which gathered together all the scum of Christendom, in order to oppose the aggression of the Saracens, were now and then diverted from their object in order to humble or destroy a Christian foe. The simple acts of a primitive worship were exchanged for innumerable masses, pilgrimages, the worshipping of images, relics, deceased saints, and the Virgin Mary. To crown the whole, the pope marched with mock majesty, but with all the force of temporal awe, into the temple; ascended the throne; gathered together around him the obsequious members of a visible catholic church; and was worshipped—successor of St. Peter though he professed to be—as the vicar of Christ, and as "His Holiness and Lord God the Pope!"

One more step, and the progress of anti-Christian error has reached its meridian; thenceforth to decline, and ultimately to give place to better things and better times. But we must reserve this for another and final chapter.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FOURTH POST-APOSTOLIC AGE; OR THE AGE OF DESPOTISM.

[A.D. 1073—1517.]

WE now come to the closing portion of our history; that in which we behold error and corruption at their highest point, afterwards to subside, at least for a season, under the operation of a principle of re-action. For it is not possible for error even to go beyond a certain point; and the very means which are used to push it to an extreme, sometimes elicit latent influences, which cause it to rebound with an unexpected energy and great curative power. This is especially the case when a prolonged course of iniquity has led to such a spirit of self-confidence and vanity, as deprives its abettors of the worldly wisdom and caution needful to continued success. We shall see in the course of this age how "vaulting ambition overleaped itself;" how temporal and spiritual despotism, by its very oppressions, prepared the way for its own overthrow; how after a long reign of darkness, accumulating year by year, until it approached the very depth of midnight, there was a gradual return to dawn, — a few streaks of light now and then arresting the attention,—afterwards to be increased, and

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eventually to be the harbingers of a world's illumination. There is encouragement in this, and good augury to man. The time may yet arrive, in which the principles and institutions of divine revelation,—carefully eliminated, and appreciated all the more highly on account of their opposite and contrasted errors,—shall again appear with more than their primitive power, moving the minds, swaying the affections, and uniting the hearts of the children of men, without any fear of reversal in succeeding times. As one end for which evil has been permitted to enter into the world, has been thought to be the final and irreversible establishment of truth and righteousness, in the convictions and habitudes of all created intelligences throughout God's universe; so it is possible, nay, probable, that the prolonged and extreme departure of the church into anti-christian error has been permitted, for the purpose of the final triumph of evangelical truth and apostolic institutions amongst all mankind. Then will the kingdom of God be fully come, and the nations of the earth shall walk in the light of His countenance.\*

But to proceed with our brief history. Towards the latter end of the eleventh century, a monk of Cluni, called Hildebrand, who had already been a successful intriguer in the election of two of the popes of Rome, succeeded in raising himself to the see, under the name of Gregory the Seventh.† He was a man of remarkable genius, suited to the age in which he lived. Full of self-possession, capable of the

\* Rev. xxi. 24.

† Waddington has an admirable chapter on the Life of Gregory the Seventh. *Hist. of the Church*, chap. xvi.

most profound dissimulation, well read in the book of human nature, thoroughly pervaded by the spirit of ambition, with a physical temperament which robbed him of all fear, and favoured by the circumstances of Europe at the time of his elevation to the supreme power; he was just the man to gather into a focus all the preceding influences which had accumulated around the popedom, in order to raise it to its highest pitch of greatness. The wealth of the Roman bishopric was enormous. Ecclesiastical subordination to the Roman see was all but complete. Having conquered the world in his own spiritual department, it was the aim of Hildebrand to add another world to his dominions, by wielding his sceptre with indisputable sway over all the princes and potentates of the earth. He was almost successful. He became for a season the universal monarch. Crowned heads were subject to him. As if he had received a patent of divine right for the purpose, he claimed the implicit submission of the kingdoms of this world.

Of course he had his conflicts and his contests; but he came off in the end victor. His first step after his advancement was to call a council, and enforce a decree of absolute celibacy on the part of the clergy; at the same time issuing an edict against the sale of ecclesiastical benefices. By the first, he separated all the priests of the Christian world from their connexion with family and kin; and, through that, from all connexion with their respective countries; thus making them subservient to his own dominion, and more directly the vassals of Rome. By the second, he transferred the authority which had been possessed by the bishops and sovereigns—by means of the rights of patronage, in filling up vacant benefices—to himself

alone. Opposition was offered to both these measures. The German emperor, Henry, together with his clergy, were prodigiously offended with the former; and at a council assembled at Worms, commenced an attack upon Gregory, charging him with every species of crime; and declaring that he had forfeited the papal throne. This act of accusation was presented to Gregory by the imperial envoy at the Roman court. Gregory took the despatches with a calm air; caused them to be read before the council, listening with an imperturbable countenance; immediately collected the opinions of the bishops by vote; declared the decree of the council of Worms to be suspended; excommunicated Henry; condemned him to lose his imperial dignity; absolved all his subjects from their oath of allegiance, and forbade all persons whatsoever to render him any obedience in future, under penalty of excommunication. If a thunderbolt had lighted on the throne of Henry its consequences could not have been more disastrous. Such was the terror inspired by the denunciations of Hildebrand, that he was abandoned by all his subjects, compelled to transmit his crown to the haughty pope, and perform an act of royal penance. He had mistaken the power of the spiritual despot, and bitterly he repaired his fault. For three days and nights he fasted bare-headed and barefoot, in an open court at Canossa, whither he had been obliged to go in person; the pope, all the while, exquisitely enjoying from one of the windows of his castle, where he was shut up with the Countess Matilda of Tuscany, the scene of humiliation. By this means a partial reconciliation was effected. Henry was humbled. On his return, however, he set on foot measures of retaliation, and would have obtained possession of the



person of the pope himself, but for the interference of Robert Guiscard of Naples.

Such was the rapid ascendancy of the popedom. The same pretensions were displayed in every state and province of Europe. France was declared tributary to the see of Rome, and an annual payment of tribute demanded by the papal legates. King Philip the first was reminded that both his kingdom and his soul were under the dominion of St. Peter, who had the power to bind and to loose both in heaven and on earth. Saxony and Spain were alike pronounced to be held on a feudal tenure from the apostolic chair. William the Norman, after the conquest of England, was surprised to learn that he held the conquered country only as a fief and tributary of Rome. The princes of Germany, Hungary, Denmark, Russia, Poland, Croatia, and Dalmatia, were reminded of their actual subjection to St. Peter. It was the object of Gregory to subordinate the political governments of Europe to his own authority, and to establish a new empire in the West on the basis of opinion. Although the claims of the pope were not universally acknowledged, they had more success than could have been anticipated a few centuries before. The superstition of the people in all countries, arising from the neglect of their professed instructors, gave appalling influence to the papal anathema. The emissaries of Rome acted the part of diligent spies in every European court, and exercised an almost unbounded authority. Gregory acquired as much of universal dominion as it was possible for a mere ecclesiastic to obtain.

The successors of Gregory, for two centuries at least, were men of consummate talent and policy, with little moderation, and scarcely any virtues. The pat-

tern which Hildebrand had set them was carefully imitated. The ideas of Hildebrand were, in some instances, more fully carried out. Successive crusades were undertaken for the avowed purpose of regaining the holy sepulchre,\* and the punishment of the Saracens for the cruelties which they had inflicted on the pilgrims to the Holy Land. By this means the power of the popes was extended. Knights, princes, and kings, together with the flower of the people, repaired to the East, under the recognized direction of the vicar of Christ, in order to avenge the wrongs done to his spiritual subjects. Every warrior became a soldier of the church. The various orders of chivalry swore fealty to Rome. Whilst living, they fought for the pope; and when dead, their property, left by legacy for that purpose, enriched the holy see. Moreover, during the absence of the princes from their respective territories, the reign of despotism was rendered more intolerable by means of the innumerable emissaries of Rome, who had thus an unobstructed way; until, returning home again these princes found how foolish the game they had been playing, and how completely they had been surrendering themselves to the projects of a spiritual tyrant. Hence the conflicts between the kings and the popes during these centuries of war and bloodshed. Hence the painful exhibition on the page

\* Sylvester the Second has the distinction of formally suggesting the idea of a crusade against the Mahometans. He wrote an epistle to the church universal, in which the European powers are exhorted to succour the Christians in Palestine. (Du Chesne, Script. Hist. Franc.) Pisa alone, it is said, prepared to obey the summons. This was at the end of the tenth century. Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. x, part i. chap. i.

of history, of endless conflicts between the temporal and spiritual powers from this period.

It was in the time of the Crusades that the practice of *indulgences* originated. These "bills of exchange upon heaven," as they have been termed,\* had then a wide circulation. The effect of this was to loosen the bonds of morality more and more amongst the profligate and abandoned; but, happily, at the same time to disgust those who had any sparks of virtue left, any natural sense of shame, with the power and the policy which could dare thus unblushingly to palm them off upon the world. During this period, also, the various orders of knighthood—Hospitallers, Templars, Teutons, etc., were established; while the mendicants, whether Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, or Augustinians, greatly increased. During this period, the *inquisition*—that monstrous institution, whose emblems are the rack and the dungeon, and whose history can be written only in blood—lighted up its terrors. During this period, incorrigible offenders against the popish supremacy were committed to the flames; and the Albigenses and other Christians, who adhered to a simple faith, and maintained a truly Christian purity of character, were almost exterminated by the devastating arms employed by Rome. The gentle nurse, whose avowed duty it was to train up her spiritual children with all meekness, kindness, and forbearance, assumed the demeanour of an incarnate fiend—a very harpy, that gloated over the

\* "Sketch of the History of the Church, from its founder to the Reformation, by Charles Villers." The latter part of this sketch is by far the most accurate. The early period is disfigured by chronological and other errors, proving that the author has followed modern authorities only, and those not the best.

miseries and the expiring groans of those who would not passively submit to her word of command.

It is needless to relate the minor details connected with the history of the so-called church of Christ at this time. Suffice it to say, that from this period, or from about the end of the thirteenth century, the power of Rome began gradually to decline.

The first palpable symptom of this fact is exhibited in the time of Boniface the Eighth, in A.D. 1303. Instigated by personal resentment against the King of France, and imagining that the power which had sported with crowned heads for ages was as unalterable as his own pretensions, he treated that monarch with the utmost insolence. Philip the Fair, however, was a man as violent, as jealous of his own sovereignty, and as daring, as Boniface. He convoked a parliament of his nobles and clergy, before whom he disclaimed with scorn any temporal allegiance to the pope, and referred the question in dispute to the decision of the assembly, which unhesitatingly and loudly pronounced its opinion in favour of the king. Previous to this, Philip had caused the pope's bull to be publicly burnt, and the fact that he had done so to be proclaimed with trumpets through the streets of Paris. The pope, nothing daunted, levelled an edict against Philip, and sent a legate into France, who boldly expressed a confirmation of the papal pretensions, and menaced the monarch with temporal as well as spiritual proceedings. The answer of Philip was most jesuitically moderate, amounting almost to humility, yet without retraction of his alleged errors. The pope, mistaking the character of his supposed victim, proclaimed his dissatisfaction with the royal answer, and with increased vehemence repeated his menaces.

While the bishops and clergy of France were too timid or too politic to separate themselves from Rome, and espouse the cause of their temporal sovereign ; Philip discovered a happy method of asserting his own rights, and settling the dispute in a very practical manner.\* By means of William of Nogaret, who tampered successfully with the personal attendants of the pope, he suddenly surprised him in the midst of the papal dominions. On the very day preceding the intended publication of another bull against Philip, Nogaret, Sciarra Colonna, and some other nobles, escorted by three hundred horse and a larger number of foot, rushed into Anagni with the banners of France floating in the air, and with shouts of "Success to the king of France! Death to Pope Boniface!" Resistance was vain. The cardinals fled; the pope's attendants were dispersed; and Nogaret became master of the palace and person of the pontiff. A few weeks after, Boniface died.

Henceforth the splendid dream and most fascinating vision of a spiritual dominion, subordinating to itself everything temporal, began to pass away, and ultimately vanished, as dreams and visions usually do. The power of the popes had culminated; had reached the zenith; and was now visibly on the decline. The seat of the spiritual empire was, shortly after this period, transferred from Rome to Avignon, in France,—as before the seat of temporal empire had been transferred from Rome to Byzantium,—and passed through a similar series of degradations. For seventy years the popes may be said to have been imprisoned in their new scene of residence, where,

\* Waddington's Hist. of the Church, p. 438.

whilst they suffered an entrenchment of their luxuries, they also endured the mortification of acting a subordinate part to France; playing the pretty game of pope, and now and then amusing the world with the feigned thunders of excommunication. Afterwards, when restored to Rome again, it was difficult to say which was the real and which was the fictitious successor of St. Peter; since one party acknowledged one, and another party another, as the true bishop of Rome. For forty years the *true succession* of the popes was a matter of doubt and fierce dispute. Then was to be beheld the spectacle of a visible catholic church—the pattern of order, and the emblem of unity—with two heads, and sometimes three, anathematizing one another in turn, reproaching one another, recriminating one another, condemning one another, damning one another, as heretics, usurpers, and antichrists!

Meanwhile the eyes of Europe were opening to the glimmering day. The people, who had so long feared even to glance from the ground at the person of so august a majesty as that which was connected with the spiritual supremacy of the Roman pontiff, now ventured to gaze upon this remarkable spectacle. In many parts it was feared that delusion had been practised upon the world, and now and then men ventured to clothe their suspicions in words. And when this unseemly strife of pope and anti-pope had ended, the venality, profligacy, and gross sensualities of a Cæsar Borghia, followed by the effeminacy of a Leo, confirmed the convictions of many that, for many ages, a spiritual incubus had been brooding over the nations of Europe, which, while it professed to exercise lordship in the name of God,

was neither more nor less than the incarnation of a foul and lying spirit of another and lower world. Times of strife and conflict, periods of political agitation and convulsion, draw on apace. Stars fall from heaven; glaring meteors rush across the firmament, from east to west, from west to east. The earth quakes in many painful throes, as if something new and strange were to make its appearance; and, as in the beginning of the gospel all the portentous events which conspired to make that period "the fulness of times," ushered in a meek and lowly man—the incarnation of Divine truth, holiness, and love; so everything in connexion with the prognostications of the present period, seemed to wait for the appearance of one who should, more distinctly and loudly than before, echo and re-echo the sentiments of the first teacher sent from heaven,—even the advent of that man who has been not unfittingly described as

"The solitary monk that shook the world."

## APPENDIX.

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### ON THE ASSEMBLY AT JERUSALEM.

[Note A, p. 64.]

THE opinions of Viscount Barrington, Neander, and Gieseler, respecting the assembly mentioned in Acts xv., are given below. The sentiments of the first-mentioned writer have not been appreciated according to their merits. We believe them to be the most correct of any that have been published, and therefore give them at large. Gieseler appears to take the same view, though his statement is brief. Neander seems to us too much hampered with his theory of development, and does not strictly adhere to the *facts* of the case. But the reader shall judge for himself.

#### 1. *Viscount Barrington's Sentiments.*

"It was to these apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem, that the message was sent from the church of Antioch, on 'certain false brethren coming thither,' with a pretended authority from these apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem, saying, 'that they must be circumcised.'"

"Whereupon Paul and Barnabas having had much disputation with them, without silencing them, or, perhaps, entirely satisfying the church of Antioch, it was agreed and determined (for which also there was a revelation)† to send up Paul, Barnabas, and others, to the church at Jerusalem about this question: not to determine it by their authority as apostles; for then Paul and Barnabas might have done it, who were

\* Acts, xv. 24.

† Gal. ii. 2; Acts, xv. 2.



acknowledged and owned as apostles in that church ; but first to know, whether these persons had the authority from the apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem, which they pretended. This appears from the answer,—‘Forasmuch as we have heard that certain men which went from us, have troubled you with words, subverting your souls ; saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment.’\* For the Holy Ghost having given a full decision against this opinion, in the case of Cornelius, on whom the Holy Ghost fell in uncircumcision, I suppose these false brethren found there was no way for them to avoid that decision, and get credit at Antioch, for the imposing circumcision, but by pretending an authority from the apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem ; as if a new revelation made to these apostles and received by that church, had given a new turn to this matter. That there were many who pretended to revelations in the apostolic times, is evident from several passages in the epistles.† Perhaps these very men are the pretenders to revelation which St. John refers to,‡ by which pretences they might have deceived the faithful, ‘if they had not an unction from the Holy One, and had not known all things.’§

“And I believe these men’s alleging that this was a new revelation made to the apostles, and pretending to bring it from the church at Jerusalem, was, together with the revelation that was actually made at Antioch, to go up to Jerusalem, the chief, if not the only reason of the church of Antioch’s sending to the church of Jerusalem ; it being necessary for the peace and safety of the church of Antioch, to know the truth of this fact ; namely, whether the church of Jerusalem was from some new revelation come to think that the devout Gentiles converted to Christianity were to be circumcised ; and whether

\* Acts, xv. 24.

† Particularly 1 Thess. v. 20, 21 ; 1 Tim. iv. 1 ; 2 Pet. ii. 1 ; 1 John, iv. 1—4, 6.

‡ 1 John, ii. 19.

§ 1 John, ii. 20.

they had sent these men with such a message to the church of Antioch. Accordingly, the apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem meet on this occasion. When they were met, some of the same leaven in the church of Jerusalem with those pretended messengers rise up to support the same side of the question. Whereupon a debate ensues; and after much disputation, and James's summing up the debate, and forming the question, they send an answer, to let them know that they did not send these messengers; and that, instead of having had any new revelation, they adhered to the decision which the Holy Ghost had made in the case of Cornelius. This answer they sent, but by messengers of their own, to explain and enforce it; and who, being prophets, were very capable of exhorting those to whom they were sent to comply with it and adhere to it. If the church of Antioch had sent for an authoritative decision, they would have sent it to one apostle: the inspiration of one being as authoritative as of a thousand. Where do we read of sending to more than one prophet of the Lord, upon any matter, under the Old Testament? Indeed, we read of a great number of false prophets being assembled to give countenance to a lie.\* But, if the church at Antioch had wanted an authoritative determination never so much, they would certainly never have sent to any more than the twelve apostles, whereas they sent to the apostles, elders, and brethren. Indeed, 'the apostles and elders' are the only persons mentioned as sent to. † But it is plain it was understood to be to the brethren too, from the brethren, or the 'whole multitude,' meeting together, and from the answer being drawn up in their name. It was usual to attribute that to the apostles, who presided in all debates and transactions in the church, when they were present, that was done by the whole assembly: as a sheriff or mayor is said to return members to Parliament, he being the officer of the assembly, though others return, or join in the return with him. The instance, Acts vi., is full to the purpose. And St. Luke probably mentions the

\* 1 Kings, xxii. 6—22.

† Verse ii.

elders here, as sent to, as well as the apostles, because they used to preside in the absence of the apostles.

“And if we could suppose that an authoritative answer was to have been sent from the whole church, yet we cannot suppose they would have debated what that answer should be; but that one of them, under inspiration, as the mouth of the rest, would have delivered the mind and will of God, saying ‘Thus said the Lord;’ \* or, ‘This is the mind of Christ;’ † ‘These things saith He that is holy and true; or the amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God;’ ‡ or, ‘We have the mind of Christ;’ § or, ‘Thus saith the Spirit;’ ¶ or, some of the other forms of speech, used by the apostles on other like occasions. Whereas, their letter runs thus:—‘That it seemed good (that is, reasonable) unto them (they do not say that it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to them, as they do afterwards to a particular purpose, and for a different reason), being assembled (that is, debating) with one accord,’ (that is, being unanimously of opinion from the debate). And to make it plain that they designed no authoritative determination, James declares against any such, or against making any new law or order. For his sentence was not to trouble the Gentiles (that is, not to lay any new injunction on them, as those had gone about to do, who had gone from them to the church of Antioch), ‘troubling them,’ || *ἀλλὰ ἐπιστεῖλαι αὐτοῖς*, ‘but to write to them (so we render it; it had, perhaps, been better to have rendered it, ‘to write a letter to them’), that it seemed good to the Holy Ghost (in the case of Cornelius, by falling immediately on him, and those that were with him), and (it therefore did) to them (the words ‘for it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us,’ naturally carry in them an inference which the assembly made from something the Holy Ghost had done), to lay no greater burthen upon them than those

\* Acts, xx. 35.

† 1 Cor. ii. 16.

|| Acts, xv. 19.

† Rev. ii. 14.

§ 1 Tim. iv. 1.

¶ Ver. 24.

necessary things;’ which they themselves, therefore, must agree, had been laid on them before,—‘That ye abstain, &c. From which things if ye keep yourselves (*διατηροῦντες* in the present tense, shewing it, at that time, to be a law), as you yourselves know you are already obliged to do, ‘ye shall do well. Fare ye well.’ This is not the style of a canon. That must have been, as St. Paul says in another case,—‘And if any man comply not with this commandment, let him be anathema, Maranatha;’\* or, ‘If any one obey not our word by this epistle, note him, and have no company with him.’†

“This was the letter they wrote. And this they send by chosen messengers, who were to speak to them more fully by word of mouth. Indeed; the words our translators have used concerning this letter seem very strong;’ ‘and as they (Paul and Barnabas) went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.’ But *τὰ δόγματα τὰ χερσμένα*, which we translate ‘the decrees ordained,’ will bear a version that carries much less of an air of power and authority along with it, and may be rendered ‘the opinions which were agreed by,’ or, ‘the unanimous judgment of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.’ Or it may be rather, ‘the adjudged laws by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.’ The sense and meaning of which is, ‘the judgment or opinion of the apostles and elders about these laws,’ namely, of Moses relating to the proselytes of the gate. This rendering would be more suitable to a letter, or epistle, that conveyed this decree; and to their sending ‘Judas and Silas’ (with Paul and Barnabas) to enforce it, who were ‘to tell them the same things more fully by mouth;’ and being ‘prophets, to exhort them’ to comply with this advice. Whereas there had been no need to have sent a letter and messengers, if it had been a decree in the strict and proper sense of the word. But our translators seem to have had the idea of a council framing a canon always before their eyes, whilst they translated these two chapters; and therefore

\* 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

† 2 Thes. v. 14; Acts, xvi. 4.

make James say,\* 'Wherefore my sentence is;' supposing him, as president of this council, to pronounce the decree. Whereas he does but sum up the debate in his speech, adding proper arguments of his own; and then adds διὸ ἐγὼ κρίνω, which might have been better rendered, 'Wherefore my opinion is.'

"So that this decree was an unanimous answer to an inquiry about a matter of fact from the church of Antioch; and was at the same time an unanimous advice, formed upon a debate, carrying its own reasons and evidences along with it, to all those to whom the letter was addressed; and to be more fully explained and evinced by the messengers who were sent with it. And, indeed as we have no instance of any absolute decree or injunction in the New Testament, from any apostle or apostles, but, from the illumination they had received, or from immediate revelation, and speaking from one or the other as the ancient prophets do, from the Lord, and in His name; and as it would be otherwise setting them up as kings in Christ's kingdom, or lords, having dominion over our faith, instead of His servants of the churches; so it must have been peculiarly improper in that state of things, from the gifts of the Spirit that abounded so much in those churches where the decrees were sent. For they were churches where St. Paul and Barnabas had been, and had, no doubt, imparted the Holy Ghost. So that these decrees cannot be supposed to be any more than the advice of spiritual men, appealing to those that were spiritual, and desiring them to judge of what they said, as St. Paul does on another occasion.† If this were the case then, I am sure, those who would have a power of making canons, or decrees (that shall bind Christians,) inherent in the church, must have some other authority for it than this decree. For if spiritual men here do no more than advise spiritual men about a known duty, from the evidence brought for it; and appeal back to their judgment upon that evidence,

\* Acts. xv. 19.

† 1 Cor. xiv. 37.

rational men (as the pretensions of Protestants go no higher,) can do no more with rational men, by virtue of this precedent. Nay, and as far as this goes, when advice is to be given, it must not be by the clergy in exclusion of, or in any over proportion to, the laity: but by the laity in a great over proportion to the clergy."—Lord Barrington's Theological Works. Vol. II. p. 171—180.

"And indeed this church seems to me, to have been at first designed by God, in his providence, and continued all along, as a church made up of proselytes of the gate, to prepare Paul and Barnabas for preaching to the idolatrous Gentiles, as well as the Jewish Christians for receiving the news of whole churches being made up of such as had been idolatrous Gentiles, (which was very surprising, if not shocking, to many of them at first, and especially to understand that they were to receive them in the Lord;) and to be in some sort, if I may so express it, the mother church of the idolatrous Gentiles, as Jerusalem was of the Jews; for, as the apostles and apostolic men were sent from the church of Jerusalem to convert Jews, Samaritans, and proselytes of the gate, to which afterwards they return to give an account of their success; so were the apostles Barnabas and Saul sent on their first peregrination by the church of Antioch, to convert the idolatrous Gentiles to the faith;\* and return thither at the end of it, and "rehearse all that God had done with them."† So likewise Paul and Silas are sent out by the same church, on Paul's second peregrination‡ (and perhaps Barnabas and Mark too.)§ And at the end of this second peregrination, they "went to Antioch, and spent some time there,"§ not barely to stay with their Christian friends, but in all likelihood to rehearse what God had done with them in this second peregrination; as they had done in the first. From hence, Paul likewise departs on his third peregrination;¶ and in all probability recommended

\* Acts xiii, 2, 3, 5.

† *Ibid.* xiv, 26, 27.

‡ *Ibid.* xv. 40.

§ *Ibid.* 39.

¶ *Ibid.* xviii. 22, 23.

¶ *Ibid.*

by the church to the grace of God, as in the two former. And as it is highly probable that, after Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, he came to Jerusalem;\* so it is very probable he might from thence go to Antioch, as he did every other time he went up to Jerusalem, after commencing an apostle; and might from thence probably set out on that fifth peregrination, which, as we gather from other places of Scripture, he went upon; though St. Luke does not carry the history of St. Paul so far. And if these were the designs of providence in settling this church, as a church of devout Gentiles converted to Christianity, Antioch must be allowed to be a city extremely well suited to that design; it being a city of Syria, a country that was thought by the Jews to be a sort of middle nature, between the holiness which they ascribed to Palestine, and the pollution of other countries; and being, like the proselytes of the gate, neither altogether holy nor profane;† and consequently a region fit for a great church of the proselytes of the gate converted to the faith.

"From all these considerations, it appears that the church at Antioch was a church composed of proselytes of the gate: and that therefore the question and decree must relate to proselytes of the gate who were become Christians.

"This accounts for the rise of the question. For it does not seem probable that any of the Jews should first of all pretend, that idolatrous Gentiles, out of Palestine, and that never dwelt or sojourned in it, though converted to Christianity, should be bound by Moses's law,—who never thought it extended beyond the Jews (that is Jews born, or such as would become Jews), or such as would live or sojourn in Palestine, and were entitled to certain privileges when they lived or sojourned there. On which account, we do not find the zealots among the Jewish Christians ‡ concerned at all at what Paul had taught the Gentiles, but only at what they thought he had taught

\* Heb. xlii. 19, 23.

† See Reland's *Antiquities of the Hebrews*.

‡ Acts xxi. 20, 21.

‘the Jews that were among the Gentiles.’ But, considering the notions they then had, it might easily come into their heads that the proselytes of the gate, who were never admitted to live or sojourn in Palestine without submitting to some of the laws of Moses, nor to a full communion with the church of the Jews without submitting to all those laws, should not be admitted to a full communion with the Christian church, and themselves as a part of it, but on the same terms. This ran in all their heads, on St. Peter’s first converting Cornelius and his family. For St. Luke tells us they said to Peter, ‘Thou wentest in unto men uncircumcised,’ that is, proselytes of the gate. And notwithstanding Peter had satisfied them all present, yet this notion was apt to recur among some of them. And though perhaps, they might carry this matter farther, and make this afterwards a question about the idolatrous Gentiles, in the second instance; yet it is not likely that they made it one about them in the first. Error, like vice, grows, and is fruitful. A less error, like a smaller fault, will lead men into greater. And people do not usually at once run into the greatest vices or absurdities, and indeed, I have some doubt whether the zealots ever insisted on the necessity of the idolatrous Gentiles observing the laws of Moses, as they did in relation to the proselytes of the gate. I rather believe, they endeavoured, by artifices from false philosophy, and by an address to their fears and sensual pleasures, to entice and draw them into a compliance with it. This, at least, appears to me on an attentive reading of the first epistle to the Corinthians; and I think may be pretty obvious to any one, on reading the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Galatians.” \*

“This is the more probable from the persons that moved the question at Antioch,—‘some of the sect of the Pharisees that believed.’ Such, at least, were those who abetted them at Jerusalem,† and most likely some of the very zealots of that zealous sect. Their constant opinion was, that no person

\* Ver. 12, 13.

† Acts xv. 5.



should be admitted to live quietly among them on the bare term of proselytism, much less be admitted to be Jews, without fully embracing their religion, and being circumcised; as may be seen, on two great occasions, in Josephus; \* whilst others thought much less would do. So that it appears, from the very persons that moved the question, as well as the place where it was moved, that this in all probability was the question now first moved in the Christian church; namely, whether the proselytes of the gate, who, as the zealots pretended, could not so much as live among them, much less be thought Jews, without circumcision, could ever be allowed to be a part of the church of Christ without it; and because the Holy Ghost had given a full decision in the case of Cornelius, that they ought (as we shall see more fully presently), therefore these men came with a pretended authority from the apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem, not putting it on the merit of the cause after such a full decision by the Holy Ghost to the contrary, but on a pretended new revelation, made since to the apostles at Jerusalem, and now brought by them as messengers of the church of Jerusalem to the church of Antioch. Every one will see, that this must have been naturally the first question that these zealots at Jerusalem were like to stir in the church, whatever question they might from thence raise afterwards in relation to the idolatrous Gentiles, when they became acquainted with the news of their conversion.

“So that this hypothesis accounts well for the rise of the question; whether we consider the question itself, the persons who moved it, and the place where, and consequently the persons about whom, it was moved.”—*Ibid.* pp. 287—293.

\* *Antiq.* 2. xx. c. 2. *Vit.* Joseph, p. 1007. B. p. 1010. C.

*2. Neander's Sentiments.*

“Before a public consultation was held at Jerusalem, there were many private conferences. The most important result was, that after Paul had given a full account to the apostles, James, Peter, and John, of his method of publishing the gospel to the Gentiles, and of the fruit of his labours, they acknowledged the divine origin of his apostleship, instead of presuming to dictate to him as his superiors. They agreed that he should continue to labour independently among the heathen, making only one stipulation,—that, as heretofore, the Gentile churches should continue to relieve the temporal wants of the poor Christians at Jerusalem. In the private circles, also, in which Paul and Barnabas recounted what God had effected by their preaching among the Gentiles, their accounts were received with joyful interest. But some who had passed over to Christianity from the Pharisaic school, now came forward, and declared that it was necessary that the Gentiles should receive circumcision along with the gospel; and that they could acknowledge them as Christian brethren only on this condition, and therefore insisted that Titus should be circumcised. But Paul strenuously maintained against them the equal privileges of the Gentiles in the kingdom of God; and that by faith in the Redeemer they had entered into the same relation towards God, as the believing Jews: for this reason he would not give way to them in reference to Titus, for this would have been interpreted by the Pharisaic Jewish Christians as a concession of the principle for which they contended.

“As these objections gave rise to much altercation, it was thought necessary that the subject should be discussed in a convention of the whole church; but this was afterwards changed into a meeting of chosen delegates.\*

\* “The whole church was far too numerous to allow of all its members to meet for consultation; but that they took a part in the deliberations

"The resolutions adopted on this occasion were now communicated to the Gentile churches in Syria and Cilicia, in an epistle drawn up in the name of the assembly; and two persons of good repute in the church, perhaps members of the presbytery at Jerusalem, Barsabas and Silas (Silvanus) were chosen as bearers of it, who were to accompany Paul and Barnabas, and counterwork the intrigues of their Judaising opponents.

"This decision of the Apostolic Assembly at Jerusalem, forms an important era in the history of the apostolic church. The first controversy which appeared in the history of Christianity, was thus publicly expressed and presented without disguise; but it was at the same time manifested that, by this controversy, the unity of the church was not to be destroyed. Although so great and striking a difference of an outward kind existed in the development of the church among the Jews, and of that among the Gentiles, still the essential unity of the church, as grounded on real communion of internal faith and life, continued undisturbed thereby, and thus it was manifest that the unity was independent of such outward differences; it became henceforth a settled point, that though one party observed, and the other party neglected, certain outward usages, yet both, in virtue of their common faith in Jesus as the Redeemer, had received the Holy Spirit as the certain mark of their participating in the kingdom of God. The controversy was not confined to these outward differences; but, as we might conclude from the peculiar nature of the modes of thinking among the Jews, which mingled itself with their conceptions of Christianity, it involved several doctrinal differences. The latter, however, were not brought under discussion; those points

appears inferrible, from the words, *συν ὅλη τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ*, "with the whole church," Acts xv. 22. The epistle to the Gentile Christians was written in the name not merely of the elders of the church, but of all the Christian brethren. Also the words, *πᾶν το πλῆθος*, "the whole multitude," Acts xv. 12, favor this interpretation."

only were touched which were most palpable, and appeared the most important from the Jewish standing-point of legal observances. While they firmly held one ground of faith,—faith in Jesus as the Messiah, and a consciousness of fellowship in the one spirit proceeding from him,—they either lost sight altogether of these differences, or viewed them as very subordinate, in relation to the points of agreement, the foundation of the all-comprehending kingdom of God. At a later period, these differences broke out with greater violence—when they were not overpowered by the energy of a Christian spirit, progressively developed, and insinuating itself more deeply into the prevalent modes of thinking. Even by this wise settlement of the question, so serious a breach could not be repaired, where the operation of that Spirit was wanting from whom this settlement proceeded. As those who were addicted to Pharisaism were, from the first, accustomed to esteem a Christianity amalgamated with complete Judaism, as alone genuine and perfect, and rendering men capable of enjoying all the privileges of the kingdom of God, it was hardly possible that these decisions could produce an entire revolution in their mode of thinking; whether it was that they looked upon the decisions of the assembly at Jerusalem as not permanent, or that they explained them according to their own views and interests,—as if indeed, though they had not commanded the observance of the laws to Gentile Christians, they were designed to intimate that it would be to their advantage, if voluntarily, and out of love to Jehovah, they observed the whole law. And as they had not hesitated, before that assembly was called at Jerusalem, to appeal to the authority of the apostles, although they were by no means authorised to do so, they again attempted to make use of this expedient, of which they could more readily avail themselves, on account of the great distance of most of the Gentile churches from Jerusalem.

“Thus we have here the first example of an accommodation of differences which arose in the development of the church.”

an attempt to affect a reunion of two contending parties,—and we here see what has been often repeated, that union can only be attained when it proceeds from an internal unity of Christian consciousness; but when the reconciliation is only external, the deeply-seated differences, though for a brief period repressed, will soon break out afresh. But what is of the greatest importance, we here behold the seal of true catholicism publicly exhibited by the apostles, and the genuine apostolic church. The existence of the genuine catholic church, which so deeply-seated a division threatened to destroy, was thereby secured.”—Neander’s History of the First Planting, &c., vol. i. p. 133—149, with some omissions.

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### 3. Gieseler’s sentiments.

“Barnabas and Saul, at Antioch, gathered from among Jews and Gentiles a church so numerous, even in wealthy members, that they were able to bring contributions thence to the brethren at Jerusalem, when a famine occurred (44 A.D., Acts ii. 27; xii. 25). After this, the two entered on the first large missionary journey through Cyprus, Pamphylia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, during which the Gospel was preached to Jews and Gentiles. After they had again abode a long time at Antioch, Hebrew Christians came thither, who excited divisions in the church, by the assertion that the newly-converted Gentile Christians must all necessarily become Jewish *proselytes of righteousness*. Hence, Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem, where they received from the collection of apostles, and the assembled church, a decision to the effect, that the Gentiles should only be required to accede to proselytism of the gate.”—Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 74.

ON THE LITERARY HISTORY OF THE EPISTLES OF  
IGNATIUS.

[Note B. p. 138—142.]

THAT our readers may know all that is necessary, in order to form a correct judgment respecting the value of the Ignatian Epistles, we give below a brief account of their literary history from the pen to which we have already acknowledged our obligation.

“There are at present fifteen epistles extant, bearing the name of Ignatius. Of these, seven have the same titles as those enumerated by Eusebius and Jerome; namely,—1. To the Ephesians; 2. To the Magnesians; 3. To the Trallians; 4. To the Romans; 5. To the Philadelphians; 6. To the Smyrneans; and 7. To Polycarp. The remaining eight are addressed, 8. To Mary of Cassobelæ; 9. To the Tarsians; 10. To the Antiochians; 11. To Heron, deacon of Antioch; 12. To the Philippians; 13 and 14. To the apostle John; and 15. To the Holy Virgin; the three latter being extant only in Latin.

“The first epistles, published under the name of Ignatius, were the three last mentioned; they were printed at Paris, in the year 1495. Three years later there appeared, at Paris eleven more of the epistles, in Latin, edited by Jacobus Faber, of Etaples (Stapulensis). These eleven letters were frequently reprinted at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the only one which had not hitherto appeared in print, was the Epistle to Mary of Cassobelæ. In the year 1516, however, the preceding fourteen letters, with the addition of the one to Mary of Cassobelæ, were edited by Symphorianus Champe-

rius of Lyon, and published at Paris. The whole of the fifteen epistles were now before the public, in Latin, and no doubt seems to have been entertained of their genuineness. It was not, however, till the year 1557, upwards of sixty years after their first appearance in Latin, that twelve of the epistles were published in Greek, by Valentinus Paceus, at Dillingen in Suabia, on the Danube, from an Augsburg manuscript. Two years later, Andrew Gesner published at Zurich, the same twelve Greek epistles, from a manuscript belonging to Gaspar a Nydpryck, apparently without any knowledge of the preceding edition.

"The appearance of these twelve epistles in Greek (the only ones extant in that language), excited the greatest interest among the learned, bearing as they did upon the subject of church government, which was then the subject of such fierce controversy. The utmost difference of opinion existed respecting them. Calvin, in his Institutes, declared that 'nothing could be more silly than the stuff which had been brought out under the name of Ignatius, which rendered the impudence of those persons more insufferable, who had set themselves to deceive people by such phantoms (*larvæ*).' Others, again, of the church of Rome, as Cardinal Baronius and the Jesuit Halloix, maintained that all these epistles were genuine and uncorrupted. The controversy grew warmer and warmer. The three epistles not extant in Greek, were soon given up; but though many stoutly contended for the genuineness of the other twelve in all their integrity, the more general opinion seemed to be, that though they were substantially the composition of Ignatius, yet they had been corrupted and disfigured by numerous interpolations.

"The first attempt to separate the genuine from the spurious epistles was made by Videlius, a professor at Geneva, who published an edition in 1623, in which he divided the epistle into two classes,—one consisting of the seven epistles enumerated by Eusebius, which he supposed to be genuine, and

the other comprising the remaining five, which he regarded as spurious. He noted, also, with inverted commas, those parts of the genuine epistles which he considered to be interpolations. His conjectures, however, were not very happy; and the first real improvement in the text was effected by Archbishop Usher. He had observed that a passage from the Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrneans, cited by Theodoret, although not found in either the Latin or Greek editions then published, had been quoted by Robert Grossteste, bishop of Lincoln, about the year 1250, in his Commentary on Dionysius the Areopagite: and also by Will. Wodeford and John Tissington, in their works against Wickliff: and Usher therefore concluded, that there must be in England some manuscripts of these epistles, from which these three writers had borrowed this passage. Upon making further inquiries, he discovered two copies of a Latin version, one belonging to the private library of Dr. Richard Montecute, bishop of Norwich, and the other to that of Caius and Gonville College, Cambridge. This version was found to contain the passage of Theodoret already referred to, and to differ in many important respects from both the Greek and Latin editions hitherto published; being, in particular, very much shorter. By means of this Latin version, Usher was enabled to introduce great improvements into the Greek text, and he published the result of his labours in an edition of the Epistles of Polycarp and Ignatius, which appeared at Oxford, in 1644. This edition contains—1. ‘Polycarp’s collection of the Epistles of Ignatius’; comprising Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians; and all the epistles mentioned by Eusebius, with the exception of the one to Polycarp, which he regarded as spurious. In the Greek text of these six epistles, all the words which have nothing to correspond to them in the Latin version, which Usher had discovered, are printed in red letters, to indicate their being spurious. This edition further contained,—2. ‘Six Epistles ascribed to Ignatius, by the Greeks of the middle ages,’ which



consist of the one to Polycarp, and the other five which had been pronounced spurious by several preceding writers. Along with the Greek text of all twelve, the old Latin version is printed in parallel columns; and at the end is given the shorter Latin version of eleven of the epistles, that to the Philippians being omitted. The work of Usher contains a valuable introduction respecting the Epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp, the Apostolical Constitutions, and the Canons ascribed to Clement of Rome.

“Usher, in his dissertation, had intimated a hope of being able still further to improve the text from the Medicean M.S. of the Greek Epistles preserved at Florence; and only two years after his edition had appeared, the celebrated Isaac Vossius, having obtained permission from the Grand Duke of Florence, published at Amsterdam the Greek text of the epistles from this M.S. It was found that the Greek text of this M.S. corresponded most closely to the Latin version, which had been previously published by Usher; but being mutilated at the end, it wanted the Epistle to the Romans. There were thus, now, two forms or recensions of the Greek text—a longer and a shorter one; with two corresponding Latin versions. The shorter recension of the Greek text of the epistle to the Romans was afterwards given by Le Clerc, from a M.S. in the Colbertine library.

“Although it was generally admitted that the shorter form of the Greek text was much purer than the longer, yet its publication by no means put an end to the controversy respecting the genuineness of the Epistles. Many of the most glaring interpolations had been undoubtedly removed, and it was accordingly felt by all parties in the controversy, that the Epistles had acquired thereby additional weight and importance. In this state of opinion upon the subject, Daille (Dallæus) one of the most eminent of the French Protestants, published his work entitled ‘*De Scriptis, quæ sub Dionysii Areopagitæ et Ignatii Antiocheni circumferuntur, liber duo,*’ 4to. Geneva,

1666, which contained by far the most formidable attack on the genuineness of the Epistles which had yet been made, and certainly makes out a very strong case against their being written by Ignatius, at least in their present form. This attack of Daille called forth an able reply from Dr. Pearson, bishop of Chester, in his '*Vindiciæ Epistolarum S. Ignatii*,' 4to, Cantab. 1672. These two works almost exhausted the question, and subsequent writers did little more than copy the respective arguments of each. The controversy has, however, been recently revived in Germany, and the longer, as well as the shorter, recension of the Greek text, has found an advocate. Some have denied the authenticity of the Epistles altogether; but the more general opinion seems to be, that they contain part, if not the whole, of the genuine letters, though with numerous corruptions and interpolations.\*

"To arrive, however, at any definite and certain opinion upon the subject, without some additional information, seemed an almost hopeless task. This, however, has been supplied by the Syriac version which has been recently published by Mr. Cureton, and to which we have already alluded. The hope of throwing further light upon the controversy by the discovery of the Syriac version of the Epistles, was entertained as long ago as the seventeenth century. The attention of Dr. Fell, dean of Christchurch, and afterwards bishop of Oxford, in the reign of Charles II., had been called to the existence of such a version by Archbishop Usher, in the dissertation prefixed to his edition of Ignatius; and hoping that the long controverted question respecting the genuineness of the epistles might be settled by the aid of this translation, Fell requested Robert Huntington, then chaplain at Aleppo (afterwards successively provost of Trinity College, Dublin, and bishop of Paphoe) to use his endeavours to obtain a copy of this version. This commission Huntington undertook with the greatest readiness, and addressed many letters on the subject to several

\* See, for instance, Neander's *History of the Church*, vol. ii. pp. 334. translated by Rose.

dignitaries of the Oriental churches, but all in vain. Not content with letters only, he made several journeys in quest of the version, and twice visited Egypt for this very purpose. On one of these occasions he advanced as far as the monastery in the desert of Nitria in Egypt, which was then in possession of the very manuscript he was so anxious to obtain; but the monks evidently concealed their treasures from him. Although disappointed in the object of his search, his inquiries convinced him that such a version was in existence. Still more explicit testimony was borne to its existence by the learned Renaudot, in the year 1716, in his work on the Liturgies of the Oriental churches; but from that time till a few years ago no further information respecting it was obtained."—Biblical Review, Jan. 1846.

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## ON THE FORGERY OF THE CLEMENTINES.

[Note C. p. 222.]

As a specimen of the manner in which literary forgeries were committed during the third and succeeding centuries, we give below, Gieseler's account of the fabrication of the *Clementines*, —a class of spurious writings, the influence of which was highly baneful then and in subsequent periods.

“A philosophically educated Christian of Rome, towards the end of the second century, took up the idea that Christianity in its original state must be preserved among the Jewish Christians as the descendants of the oldest church. Probably while he was searching after it himself in its secrecy, and found it dispersed among several parties, he discovered among the *Elcesaites* (or Ebionites), a speculative doctrinal creed already formed, which seemed to him perfectly adapted both to vanquish heathenism and to remove the multiplicity of Christian sects. He received it therefore, as the original Christian doctrine which had obtained its central point in James and in Peter, its most important defenders, and appropriated all the more readily the Elcesaitic rejection of Paul, who, inasmuch as he was not an immediate disciple of Christ, could not have been a genuine apostle, because the Pauline development of Christianity had run out into so great a state of disunion, and appeared to have attained its height in the Marcionite errors. Hence he composed the *Clementines*, (*τὰ Κλημεντία*) consisting of three prologues and twenty (but now only nineteen) homilies, that he might be able to proclaim to Christendom at large the apostolic truth which had long

been concealed, by apostolic lips also. The historical form in which he clothed the whole work he took in part from the events of his own life. But he reckoned upon it also for the purpose of procuring apostolic authority to his doctrine, and obtaining an introduction for it into Rome in particular. As he himself had sought to travel into the East, so he makes the apostolic *Clement* (who was highly esteemed in the recollection of the Roman church, and who appears here in the character of a distinguished Roman whose mind had received a philosophical culture) to journey into the same regions for the purpose of meeting with Peter, and obtaining full satisfaction from him. Under the impulses of a strong desire for the truth, which had long been sought in vain, Peter, the only one of the immediate disciples of Christ who had come to Rome, appears here in opposition to Paul, who was the proper apostle of the Gentiles, as the founder of the Romish church, and the first bishop of Rome. He triumphantly refutes all kinds of error which had been committed by different persons, not only the popular faith and philosophy of the heathen, but also the Christian aberrations of the second century. The gnostics, in particular, are combated in the person of Simon Magus; and in addition to them the Montanist prophesying, the hypostatic doctrine of the Trinity, and millenarianism. On the other hand, Peter proclaims and supports, by mighty miraculous deeds, the following doctrine: God, a pure, simple being of light, has allowed the world to be formed in contrasts; and so also the history of the world and of men runs off in contrasts (*συζυγίαι*) corresponding by way of pairs, in which the lower constantly precedes the higher. From the beginning onward, God has revealed himself to men, while his Holy Spirit, from time to time in the form of individual men, (Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus,) as the true prophet, constantly announced the very same truth, and in Jesus caused it also to be communicated to the heathen, according to the law of syzygies (or pairs;) false prophets also

are always produced in addition to the true, (Matt. xi. 11.) who corrupt the truth. Thus the original doctrines of Mosaism are perfectly identical with Christianity; though they have not been preserved in their purity in the Pentateuch, which was not composed till long after Moses; and in the present form of Judaism, have been utterly perverted. In general, the truth has been constantly maintained in its purity only by a few, by means of secret tradition. Man is free, and must expect after death a spiritual continuation of life, with rewards and punishments. The conditions of happiness are love to God and man, and struggling against the demons which draw away to evil through sensuality. For this purpose, these sectaries prescribed abstinence from animal food, frequent washings and fastings, recommended early marriage, and voluntary poverty, but rejected all sacrifice.

“While the author of the Clementines, from the position of the Elcesaitic doctrine, combats parties with which the Elcesaites had never come into contact, he must necessarily go into many new developments of doctrine. How free his movements were in these, may be seen from the fact that he frequently used for his purpose our four gospels, unknown to the Elcesaites, with great critical and exegetical arbitrariness. On this very account we might indeed doubt whether he left the Elcesaitic doctrine itself entirely untouched.

“Although the doctrine here presented could not calculate on any general dissemination, and found several adherents only in *Rome* and *Cyprus*, yet many felt themselves attracted by the historical contents of the production, and its refutation of the heathens and the gnostics; and since the author knew how to account for the late appearance of his work, which pretended to proceed forth from the apostolic age, they rather thought of it as the corruption of a genuine writing by heretics than of forgery. Hence, another person was soon found, probably an Alexandrian, who conceived the idea of purifying it from heretical depravations, while he altered it entirely accord-

ing to the standard of orthodoxy in his day. In this way arose the production which appears under different names among the ancients, and which still exists, but only in the Latin translation of Rufinus, under the title *Recognitiones Clementis*, lib. x. The requirements of a much later orthodoxy gave rise to the *ἱερομῆ*."—Gieseler's Eccl. Hist. vol. i. p. 206—211.

END OF VOL. I.

**THE**  
**HISTORY OF THE REVIVAL AND PROGRESS**  
**OF**  
**INDEPENDENCY IN ENGLAND.**





THE  
HISTORY OF THE REVIVAL AND PROGRESS  
OF  
INDEPENDENCY  
IN ENGLAND,  
SINCE THE PERIOD OF THE REFORMATION;

WITH  
AN INTRODUCTION, CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE PRINCIPLES OF INDEPENDENCY IN THE AGE OF CHRIST  
AND HIS APOSTLES, AND OF THE GRADUAL DEPARTURE  
OF THE CHURCH INTO ANTICHRISTIAN ERROR,  
UNTIL THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION.

BY  
JOSEPH FLETCHER,

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FLETCHER," Author of "SIX VIEWS OF INFIDELITY," &c.

VOL. II.



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# ANALYTICAL TABLE

## OF THE

### SECOND VOLUME

#### OF

## THE HISTORY OF INDEPENDENCY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### PROGRESS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM BEFORE THE REVIVAL OF INDEPENDENCY.

**THERE** are many circumstances in the history of Independency in England which lend it a peculiar interest, apart from the sacredness of those associations which invest a divine cause, and the prophetic lustre reflected on the early stages of a career destined to triumph. The onward progress, through a long succession of years, of principles opposed to predominant political and ecclesiastical systems, must necessarily be marked by many striking incidents and many stirring events. The character of the men who advocated those principles, the conflicts and sufferings they endured, the noble stand they were enabled to make for freedom, the proud achievements whose results they transmitted to their successors in the hallowed cause of liberty, and the influence they exerted upon the age in which they lived,—are points of moment to every thoughtful and philosophic mind.

Not less interesting is the fact, which gradually discloses itself, of principle prevailing over prejudice and power. While ordinary history is occupied with succession of pageants that move along with little apparent connexion, like the rapidly shifted scenery of the stage; or at most with a succession of political

and ecclesiastical catastrophies in which there is little of order or interesting sequence; our history traces the continuous transmission of well-defined and identical principles from generation to generation. The advocate may die but the principles remain. Time only mellows them. New advocates appear, in each successive period, only in greater number than before. Changes transpire in every department of human action; but these newly discovered truths maintain a divine consistency, and acquire augmented force, amidst all the fluctuating events of the political and religious world. Popery and protestantism pass through their Protean forms, according as the expedient of the day may determine; but Independency continues, as in the beginning, the perfect, unalterable system to which inspired apostles lent their finishing hand.

What renders the steady advancement of Independency in England unique, is the circumstance that it excludes from its service the appliances by which other systems are usually advanced. Refusing on principle the aid of secular power, and the patronage of civil sanction, the wonder is that it should have prolonged its existence through any extensive period. It has generally been deemed essential to the church's perpetuity, and much more to its universal extension, that it should win over to its side the influential and the powerful, the magistrate and the ruler; and in order to this it has been thought fitting, that more or less of hierarchical subordination should be assumed by the church itself, in order to its proper management as a whole, confederate with and dependant upon the state. Our history, however, completely reverses the conditions

judged essential to perpetuity and progress. Independency not only repudiates all connexion with the civil power, but excludes every approximation to hierarchical distinctions; dividing rather than uniting the church as to what is authoritative, by constituting every local congregation a self-governing republic, and expressly forbidding any union between the several religious communities which, by amalgamating their interests, may undermine their individual independence. Thus the system is shorn of all worldly strength. It is a negation upon court smiles and regal favours. It will not be aided and abetted by the world in the world's way. It repeats the disclaimer of its author, "my kingdom is not of this world." It refuses to be petted, patronized, and spoiled. And yet, it is the only consistent and really permanent system of all that strive for pre-eminence. Popery is everlasting change. Protestantism varies with every new political dynasty. Episcopacy suffers diminution or accession of glory with every change affecting a territorial establishment. Presbytery depends upon numbers for the multiplication of its synodical arrangements, and upon the state of parties for the harmony or discordancy of its movements. Independency alone has persistence amidst all the changes of dynasty, party, and territorial distribution; dependant on none of these things, but only on the existence of "the faithful" whether few or many. As a system, it is as perfect in adversity as in prosperity; as much so amidst the newly-gathered converts on a missionary station where heathenism frowns around, as amidst the smiles and sympathies of associated churches in a country partially or wholly evangelized; as much so in "an upper

room" at Jerusalem, when the number of the names of the disciples is about "an hundred and twenty," as in a more advanced period when whole regions yield their converts to the cause of the Redeemer and the churches are multiplied.

There is another circumstance in the history of Independency which renders it a noble study for the patriot and philanthropist, the liberal statesman and the lover of freedom. This is to be found in its modifying influence over opposing systems, whether political or ecclesiastical. Hume has made honourable mention of this circumstance in reference to its most palpable exhibition, perhaps because it could not be avoided. His observation has directed him to notice the liberty won for mankind by the most practical of all kinds of advocacy, namely, suffering, on the part of the Independents during the dynasty of the Stuarts. A wider observation will lead to the recognition of a more general truth. Not only did the Independents fulfil their share of suffering service, side by side with the Nonconformists and Puritans; but their principles boldly espoused as distinctive and fixed principles, while all other systems were based more or less upon expediency or assumption, gradually effected the most important changes in the spirit and temper of the rest. Popery and protestantism, episcopacy and presbytery, mere nonconformity and puritanism, are compatible with almost any assignable amount of that pernicious element which leads, as opportunity serves, and interest or policy moves, to persecution and domination; and if at any time innocent of the charge of persecution and intolerance, owe it rather to the state of the times, than to anything in their own nature which excludes

their adherents from these vices. The oppressed catholics of Ireland might, in a distant age, have been the retainers of Simon de Montfort, in his war of extermination against the Albigenses,—without any change of principles. The protestantism of Germany in the fifteenth century, which assumed a defensive attitude against the oppressions of popery, becomes aggressive and persecuting in the next century, in a neighbouring country, although retaining its protestant name. The episcopalianism of Cranmer, which reaps an unmerited glory from his martyrdom in the age of Mary, was no restraint upon his intolerance in the reign of Henry the Eighth and Edward the Sixth. The presbyterianism of the Free Church of Scotland is not inconsistent with the advocacy of a principle which, in the days of Charles the First, sought to establish an organized oppression as intolerant as that of popery itself. But Independency has not only ever been the same from the period of its revival to the present, whether frowned upon or favoured, whether suffering or in the ascendancy; more than this, it has exerted an influence upon these systems, which it is impossible to estimate too highly. A fixedly liberal system itself, it has tended to liberalize other systems not essentially liberal. Its advancement has ever had more or less of disintegrating power on systems which would otherwise have preserved an immoveable aspect of confederated and well-compacted despotism. Where it has not assimilated to itself, it has softened and subdued. Papists, episcopalians, presbyterians, have avowedly admitted into their respective systems as much of its liberal element as is compatible with their peculiar organizations; and mere statesmen and



politicians have learned some of their most valuable lessons in the science of liberty and liberal advancement from the pages of its history. Indeed, it would be difficult to over-estimate the amount of obligation under which it has laid the world by virtue of the ameliorating influences it has exerted in successive periods of modern history, on the ecclesiastical and political institutions of our country.

Important, however, as are these circumstances in reference to the past, they do not constitute the chief interest of our subject. That is derived from the prospective spread of Independency as a Divine system instituted in order to an universal diffusion, and an ultimate ascendancy. Truth has always waited for man to come round to its side. Christianity has ever been patient for its own triumphs. The history of the past progress of Independency is but a portion of an ever accumulating whole. The narrow stream widens as it flows, and is destined to bear the commerce of the world. The prophetic parable of the grain of mustard seed is still only in part accomplished; the sowing of that grain, and its germination heretofore, are important, mainly on account of our faith in respect to the future.

To the philosophic mind, enlightened by revelation, the future advancement of Independency is fraught with ever growing interest—akin to that with which the Christian in his more generalized view of the future, contemplates the universal extension of Messiah's kingdom. The past history of Christianity is fraught with memorable events; but its chief glory is, that it forms part of a more glorious whole. The ages are radiant with glory because of their anticipated consummation. The truth shall prevail. One element

—the element of liberty—shall not be wanting. That system which apostles instituted, and from which the church early departed, shall be restored to its Divine place in the general triumph. Worldly influence shall cease; hierarchical subordination shall be no more; synodical mechanism shall not usurp the place of consentaneous spontaneity; congregational self-government shall terminate the reign of domination; individual conscience shall be the final arbiter; and *all* shall co-operate freely with the unity of *one*.

The result will be the permanent enjoyment of the highest liberty possible in matters of religion. Individually, socially, politically, man will be free. All the positive good which can be derived from union and association with others, will be reaped by every individual; while from the protection which the system of a prevalent Independency shall throw around him, all the evil so commonly attendant upon union and association will be prevented. The line of a Divine discrimination will be practically drawn between the possible and safe, and the non-possible and dangerous in matters of fellowship and co-operation; and by an universal consent it will be admitted that that particular mode of church organization which though Divinely instituted, was so easily departed from, and so slowly and reluctantly restored to its original place amongst the things of God, is alone expedient, because alone Divine. Such, at least, are the anticipations of those who inherit the principles of Independency, and from such a source do they derive all the interest thrown around the progress of those principles in time past. They watch the slow growth of the heavenly plant with interest and anxiety, on account of the fruit anticipated. As angels bent over

the cradle of Jesus in Bethlehem, although to common observers it was no better than a manger, on account of the destiny of him who innocently slept there; so *they* watch with anxiety every feature of the infant cause in by-gone days, because of an unshaken confidence respecting its future maturity and ultimate glory.

Other systems may have had their uses; and their present and future continuance for a season may be over-ruled for good. But nothing more. It is not for us to judge of principles, or practices, by the results which an over-ruling Providence may have effected through them; but by their natural tendency and character. The Divine prerogative of bringing good out of evil is no pattern for man. The permitted reign of sin and darkness will doubtless be rendered ultimately subservient to some wise purpose. The bondage of Israel in Egypt, though a burden of reproach and infamy against the Pharaohs, became a means of fulfilling the Divine plans in relation to his people. The usurpations of antichrist during so many centuries shall ultimately redound to the glory of the Redeemer and his true church. But all this affects not the question of personal duty respecting what has been appointed and is known to be right. If the institutions of apostolic times are Divine to the exclusion of all others, every conflicting system having its origin in innovation on the basis of a merely human expediency; if those institutions shall in the end universally prevail; it must be the duty of all who thus believe to espouse their interests and advocate their diffusion. To think, feel, act, otherwise is, according to the hypothesis, to adopt evil; and though good may come out of such evil, by

virtue of a Divine over-ruling, that evil must not be done.

The peculiar and exclusive claims of Independency have already been exhibited. It is unnecessary, therefore, to expatiate upon them here. We have seen that a fair interpretation of the New Testament records develops a system of principles in reference to church organization accordant with the genius of the Christian religion, and adapted to the spiritual and social condition of man; a system framed by Divine wisdom for the conservation of freedom and union, liberty and order; a system which admits as much of good arising from the agency of blended sympathies and concerted operations, as is compatible with individual responsibility and voluntary action, while it excludes, if not all, yet the more formidable evils which are fostered and perpetuated more or less by every other system; a system which delegates to the individual conscience absolute supremacy in order that Christ may have the pre-eminence; which encourages union between Christian men and churches on the only safe basis, that of voluntary sympathy and co-operation; which excludes the secular power from all interference with man's spiritual being and well-being; and which thus renders to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. This system had a practical embodiment, not only during the apostolic age, but for many years after; and the successive steps by which it was undermined, as recorded on the page of history, constitute a strong argument in favour of the primitive origin of the system itself. The departure of the church into antichristian error, like the ebbing of the tide which leaves behind its own high-water mark, is cor-

roborative of the fact of the previous existence of that from which the departure began.

Our object in the following history will be to trace an opposite course to the one already traced in a former volume. There we saw how the fine gold became dim, and dross was substituted and made current for the sterling metal. We have now to show how, after a long period of neglect, the way was prepared for the revival of Independency in England, and to trace the subsequent progress of conviction in relation to that system in successive periods. The causes of that revival will form the subject of another chapter. We propose to commence with a retrospective glance at the progress of freedom in its more palpable exhibitions, previous to the period when our history properly commences. Regarding the system of Independency as the expression of a perfect, because Divinely instituted, liberty in religion, we look back and ask, how much of this Divine element entered into the struggles and conflicts of the past: not simply how much of evangelical or uncorrupted doctrine was held; but how much of approving recognition was given to that Divine system from which the church so early departed into hierarchical error and spiritual domination.

To trace with perfect accuracy the progress of religious freedom in Europe, from any very early period to that of the reformation from popery, would be a difficult task. That progress has never been uniform. The retrograde are so often collateral with the onward processes, that to determine at any period whether progress or departure has been effected would not be easy. The course of liberty, like that of the gospel, is too dependant on unseen

agencies to be traced on the page of history with the continuity of a stream that commences at a fixed source and flows onward to its destined end. Although, looking back from the present period, it would be safe to assert that progress has been made in the cause of truth and freedom on the whole, more must be ascribed to the over-ruling providence of God than to the natural causes by which some minds are wont to account for every thing. Even the Great Reformation of the sixteenth century was more due to the interposition of Divine power than most historians are willing to acknowledge. While it is confessed that many circumstances, to be accounted for from natural causes, conspired to aid in that great achievement; what reader of the history of that era can doubt that there were many crises in which the whole work might have been driven backward, even as in the time of Wickliff and Huss, had not an unseen hand smoothed the way for ultimate success.

It is safer, therefore, and more profitable to trace the workings of principle than of parties in reference to the past, and to delineate the growth of truth in the minds of men rather than the growth of power as confederate with it.

There are traces of witnesses for the truth, in purer forms than were to be found in the early catholic and later Roman-catholic church, in every age of Christianity. But of many of them little is known. The enemy has either destroyed their records, or so falsified them as to render the precise title which they have to our veneration a matter of conjecture rather than certainty. To follow the light of conviction in opposition to the views of a dominant hierarchy, has always been the way to excommunication, and often

to martyrdom ; and, from the time of Priscillian\* downwards, through many centuries, myriads have perished in consequence of following their own religious faith in opposition to that of the more powerful party. In successive periods we read of heretics and schismatics, to whom the most calumnious epithets are applied, and the most pernicious doctrines ascribed, whose faith was, in all probability, purer than that of the reputed orthodox. The known errors of the catholic, Roman-catholic, and Greek church, are proof that those whom they proscribed and destroyed might be more faithful adherents to a scriptural Christianity than their foes ; and the almost general fact, that the imputed heresy has been connected with an appeal to scripture, instead of resting upon the decisions of councils, confirms the position. Amongst these victims of intolerance and spiritual supremacy, were men of independent thought and enlightened as well as conscientious principles, approximating nearly to those of the earliest confessors and martyrs of the primitive church. It is barely possible for men to be willing martyrs for private opinions not derived from the Divine word. But such instances are always rare, and originate in a very peculiar temperament. The religious conviction that is not based upon a standard conceived to be infallible, seldom has in it the self-sustaining energy requisite to steadfastness of opposition amidst overwhelming numbers, and in the prospect of martyrdom. On this account, as well as from the fact, so generally apparent, that the so-called heterodox and heretic of successive periods referred to scripture or primitive tradition in

\* The first sufferer for *heresy*, so called, A.D. 384, at Treves.

the maintenance of their views, there is reason to believe that in the day of the reversal of iniquitous human judgments the orthodox and the heterodox of history will very generally have to change places, and that in this sense many of the first will be last, and many of the last first.

The most extensive body of Christian men with the story of whose principles and wrongs the page of history is occupied previous to the Reformation, is that which has been known under the name of the Vaudois, Waldenses, and Albigenses.\* The documents pertaining to their early history have perished, and their names do not meet us in any records farther back than the twelfth century. There is reason, however, to believe that their origin may be traced to the fourth century, the period of divergence from the catholic church, consequent upon its worldly establishment by Constantine. One of their enemies† of the thirteenth century makes it a ground of accusation against them, that they could refer to the antiquity of their system of doctrine and organization, and specifi-

\* Besides Mosheim, Milner, and Waddington, I would refer the reader to "The Vaudois: comprising observations made during a tour to the Valleys of Piedmont, in the summer of 1844; together with remarks, introductory and interspersed, respecting the origin, history, and present condition of that interesting people; by E. Henderson, D.D.;"—for accurate information respecting the early history of the Vaudois, and their relation to the Waldenses. See also the "History of the Crusades against the Albigenses in the Thirteenth Century, from the French of Sismondi;" Introductory Essay by W. Youngman.

† Reinier, or Reiner, a monk of Placentia, who according to Venema (*Hist. Ecc. t. vi. p. 116*) was first a leader amongst the Waldenses, and afterwards a deserter and bitter foe. Reinier became at last inquisitor-general.



cally mentions the time of Sylvester I., who was bishop of Rome at the time of the Council of Nice, in the early part of the fourth century, as the era to which they themselves traced their primitive dissent. A later witness speaks of them as asserting an apostolic origin;\* which they might easily do, on the supposition that their ancestors of the fourth century traced their spiritual lineage back to apostolic times. We have seen, however, that before the fourth century the church had generally departed from the apostolic institutions, having admitted a distinction between bishops and presbyters not warranted by the practice of the primitive churches; and having come under the operation of synodical influence, in consequence of following the model of the political institutions of the Greeks, instead of adhering to the model of church organization of the first age.† From what we know of the presbyterial discipline of the Waldenses in every period of their history down to the present time, we are inclined to think that the testimony of Reinier is true, and that they are a branch from the parent stem of the church as it existed in the fourth century. While the catholic church was extending and consolidating its hierarchical power, and the Roman bishopric was seeking to aggrandize itself by every species of sinful alliance and spiritual pretension, the more simple Christians of Gaul were spreading the gospel from city to city, until they became a numerous and influential body. From time to time they were joined by those Italian exiles who

\* A manuscript obtained by Morland, dated A.D. 1587.

† See the Introduction to the present work, vol. i. book ii. chap. iii., "On the Second Post-Apostolic Age, or the Age of Innovation."

fled the scene of Roman domination that they might breathe a purer atmosphere of liberty in the valleys of Piedmont and the farther regions of the West. Thus a body of Christians, originating in two different quarters, came more or less nearly into connexion with one another, although preserving in some respects their distinctive peculiarities. The Vaudois took their name from the *Vaux* or valleys where they settled down as inhabitants; and the Waldenses, from the *Wald* or forest regions of France and Germany. In many respects identical with these, were the Albigenses, named after Albigesium, a province of Narbonnese Gaul, the chief city of which was called Albi. Related to all three were many other Christian sects, bearing various names according to the districts in which they prevailed, the leaders they followed, or some peculiarities by which they were distinguished.\* Amongst so many religious sects, existing through various periods, it is to be expected that some variety of doctrine and practice should prevail; neither is it needful to vindicate all of them from the charges brought against them in successive centuries by their Roman-catholic persecutors. It is quite possible that *some* may have been guilty of false doctrines and extravagant practices, and yet that in general these martyrs and confessors were a worthy as well as very numerous body of Christian

\* Such as Leonistæ, or poor men of Lyons; Sabbatatorum, from the wooden shoes, or *sabots*, they were accustomed to wear; Patarini, from their sufferings; Turpelini, or Turelupini, from Turelupin, whose children perished miserably, and whose wretchedness was thought to resemble that of the Christians in Flanders and Artois; Picards, Lombards, Bohemians, Bulgarians, etc., from the countries inhabited.

men,\* adhering to a more primitive faith and worship than was observed by any professed Christians of their day.

To narrate, however briefly, the persecutions they endured, and the exterminating wars which the Romish church waged against them in different periods and countries, would be foreign to our purpose. Suffice it to say, that the number of those who perished in consequence of refusing to submit to spiritual usurpation amounted on the whole to some millions; and that in their history we read the fulfilment of the apocalyptic prophecy respecting the Babylonian woman "drunk with the blood of the saints." It more nearly concerns us to ascertain the amount of religious freedom asserted and acted upon by the parties we have named; and how far it is probable that the cause of religious freedom would have been advanced in the world, if they had been successful in procuring an actual ascendancy for their views. We cannot forget that, in many instances, the persecuted of one age have become the persecuting party of another. It is important, therefore, to ascertain whether our sympathies are to be engaged with the principles or merely with the unhappy position of these hereditary sufferers.

Whatever differences may have existed in refe-

\* Reinier testifies that in all the cities of Lombardy, and in Provence, and in other kingdoms and nations, there were more schools of heretics than of accredited theologians, and more auditors. The author of the Belgian Chronicle says, "the error of the Albigenses prevailed to that degree that it had infested as much as a thousand cities, and if it had not been repressed by the swords of the faithful, I think it would have corrupted the whole of Europe." Alas! that such a process of corruption should have been hindered.

rence to the principles of church organization held by the Vaudois and those with whom we have associated their name, there was much in their conduct worthy of the warmest approval. In general, they were free from the charge which weighs so heavily on the persecutor. They were willing, in most instances, to confer on others the liberty they sought for themselves. They not only deprecated the corrupt and superstitious practices of the church of Rome, but denied its authority to impose upon them its views of faith and discipline. And although they leaned too much to traditional views respecting church association and government, it was a part of their creed to appeal to the Word of God as the final authority in religion.\* We have already intimated our belief that, as an historic community their origin may be traced to the fourth century; and their ecclesiastical principles reaching down to the present day, combined with their own avowal of the fact in the time of Reinier, corroborate the truth of the conviction. It could not, therefore, be asserted of them that they attained to a primitive form of church organization fitted to develop that amount of liberty in connection with order and union which Christ intended to be enjoyed in the exercise of his religion.† If their circumstances had been different, there was nothing in their principles to prevent them from

\* Reinier says, "I have heard and seen a certain unlearned rustic, who recited the Book of Job, word by word, and many who perfectly knew the New Testament."

† See "The Vaudois" referred to before, chap. xiii., and Appendix containing the Confession of Faith, published by the Vaudois churches of Piedmont in 1655.

manifesting more or less of the spirit of domination. Indeed, their very system of synodical authority implies as much; and now and then we have more than intimations of the fact that the full liberty of Christ's free men was not enjoyed in their midst. While Claude, of Turin, in the ninth century exerted his extensive influence most beneficially in resisting the aggressions of Rome, it is evident that that very influence was derived from a false position of prelatical assumption. Neither are we sure, that while espousing the cause of orthodoxy and of a comparatively spiritual worship, he did not at the same time exercise a spiritual domination over his own diocese. In like manner Arnold, of Brescia, whilst seeking to separate the civil from the ecclesiastical power, left undetermined those principles by which the latter might be exercised with safety. In many of the valleys of Piedmont, as well as in France and Bohemia, not only was a moderately hierarchical and synodical power exhibited, which trespassed upon the rights of individual conscience and congregational self-government, but the citizen was too much blended with the Christian, and the municipal with the ecclesiastical. Taking, therefore, a generalized view of the progress of religious freedom amongst the sects now under consideration, we are compelled to conclude that it was, in some important respects, partial. In so far as it was connected with an appeal to Scripture as the ultimate authority in religion, it was hopeful. This *might* become the path to ecclesiastical perfection. But this alone was not sufficient. In later periods, the cry of "the Bible—the Bible alone!" has been heard in the camp of those who resisted the

aggressions of Romish power and pretension ; and yet such a cry has not been deemed inconsistent with the employment of civil authority to enforce certain systematized views of the truth contained in that Bible. While, therefore, viewing the history of this people as a whole, we are prepared to admit their innocence of any very grave acts of persecution, we cannot forget how, in some seasons of prosperity, they used unscriptural and illiberal means to establish their own principles amongst their fellow-men ; we cannot forget that their commingling of the civil with the religious often led to the evils which they once deprecated when they were the parties aggrieved ; neither can we avoid perceiving, that their synodical and presbyterial arrangements often opened a door to spiritual domination on the part of majorities over those who conscientiously differed from them. They did not possess that perfect shield of liberty which apostolic institutions provided ; and, retaining the predilections of the fourth century, were not sufficiently enlightened to return to the purer principles of the first.

While these witnesses for the truth were perpetuating their faith, and suffering at the hands of the Romish church in the west, the Paulicians were occupying a similar position in reference to the Greek church in the east. Their history, commencing with Paul of Samosata,\* in the third century, appears from time to time through a period of eight or nine hundred years. To judge from the calumnies of their

\* They were also called Paulians, from which circumstance some have supposed that their peculiarity consisted in appealing to the writings of the Apostle Paul against the authority and practices of

enemies and the loose statements of modern historians, they were the most obstinate of heretics. On inquiry, however, it appears that their chief error consisted in appealing to Scripture, and refusing adhesion to a corrupt church. Petrus Siculus, who treated with them as an ambassador at Tibrica, where they defended their liberties under favour of the Saracens in the ninth century, wrote against them afterwards, in his "History of the Manichæans;" calumniating them by the company in which he placed them, and, happily, refuting his own calumny, by the details adduced against them.\* It is a singular circumstance,—if the Paulicians were a "pernicious sect," and the abettors of "pestilential doctrines,"—that the period of the highest corruption and immorality in the Greek church should have been the period of *their* fiercest persecution. Such, however, is the fact. In the ninth century, when "the ignorance and corruption that dishonoured

the Greek church.—See Liberty of Conscience Illustrated, by J. W. Massie, D.D., p. 33. Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. liv.

\* For example, he states that Sergius, one of their leaders, was won over and corrupted by a Manichæan woman. The following dialogue shows in what her Manichæanism consisted:—"Tell me," she says, "why you do not read the sacred gospels." To which Sergius replies, "It is not lawful for us who are profane to read those books, but belongs to the priests." "Not so," she rejoins; "it is not as you suppose; for there is no accepting of persons with God, who would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. But your priests, because they adulterate the Word of God, and hide its mysteries contained in the gospels, do not read to you, who cannot read for yourselves, all the things which are written."

the Christian church were great beyond measure," \* the Greeks were engaged in "a most bitter controversy, or, to speak more properly, in a bloody and barbarous war with the Paulicians." In the reigns of Michael Curopalates and Leo the Arminian, and more especially under the regency of the empress Theodora, the sufferings they endured in consequence of refusing to return to the bosom of the church are almost incredible. The decree of the empress was one of extermination ; and myriads perished, either through fire or sword, or under the slower processes of a most barbarous torture. The Saracens had compassion upon those whom the self-constituted orthodox of the Christian church hastened to destroy ; and but for Mohammedan humanity the sect would have been annihilated.

What more nearly concerns us, however, in reference to the Paulicians, some of whom are said to have settled in Bulgaria, and to have mingled with the antagonists of Roman domination in the west, † is the amount of liberty, based on scriptural views of the church's organization and constitution, which they brought to light and embodied in their ecclesi-

\* Mosheim, cent. ix. Part II. chap. iii. sec. iii. See also the whole of this century.

† Bossuet, in his History of the variations of the Protestant Churches, book xi., endeavours to connect the history of the Vaudois, Albigenses, etc., with that of the Paulicians. See in particular, sect. 16. The patience of the candid reader is sorely taxed in reading this history of variations. Often, however, the passionate prejudices of the writer create a smile. For example, speaking of the Paulicians, he says, "This sect, so hidden, so abominable, so full of seduction, of superstition, and hypocrisy, notwithstanding imperial laws which condemned its followers to death, yet maintained and diffused itself."



astical system. We can afford to pass over the doctrinal errors falsely imputed to them, seeing that nothing is more common than for persecutors to invent an obnoxious creed for those whom they wrong; but we must pause to notice the simplicity of their views in respect to church fellowship and order—a matter respecting which they were less likely to be misrepresented. “They had not,” says Mosheim, “an ecclesiastical government administered by bishops, priests, and deacons; they had no sacred order of men distinguished by their manner of life, their habit, or any other circumstance, from the rest of the assembly; nor had councils, synods, or such like institutions, any place in their religious policy. They had certain doctors whom they called *Suneclemi*, that is, companions in the journey of life, and also *Notarii*. Among these there reigned a perfect equality, and they had no peculiar rights, privileges, nor any external mark of dignity to distinguish them from the people. The only singularity that attended their promotion to the rank of doctors was, that they changed their lay-names for scriptural ones, as if there had been something peculiarly venerable in the names of the holy men, whose lives and actions are recorded in the sacred writings. They received all the books of the New Testament, except the two epistles of St. Peter, which they rejected, for reasons unknown to us; and their copies of the gospel were exactly the same with those used by all other Christians, without the least interpolation of the sacred text. They, moreover, recommended to the people, without exception, and that with the most affecting and ardent zeal, the constant and assiduous perusal of the Holy Scriptures; and expressed the utmost indig-

nation against the Greeks, who allowed to the priests alone an access to these sacred fountains of Divine knowledge."

Whatever opinion may be formed respecting the appropriation of scripture names on the part of the Paulician doctors, (a practice not more remarkable than that followed in England by the Puritans and others), it is evident that a great degree of religious freedom was enjoyed by all the members of this much abused sect, and that, too, on a systematic basis of enlightened principle. When the bishop and presbyter of the Greek church had so far departed from the original functions of those who bore the two-fold name in apostolic times, it is not astonishing that the Paulicians should prefer another nomenclature, lest by using it they should appear to sanction novelty instead of ancient practice. Evidently, however, the *Synecdemi* and *Notarii* were ministers, to whom a proper respect was paid; while it is as evident that they had no personal authority. They were "helpers of the joy" of the faithful, instead of "masters;" "companions beloved and highly esteemed for their works' sake," rather than "lords over God's heritage." The total absence of all synodical authority is another circumstance which marks a primitive origin, and evinces an enlightened state of mind in respect to the principles of fellowship and association; while the constant and earnest reference to Scripture, as the practical guide of the individual as well as of the church, confirms the conviction that more of religious freedom was systematically enjoyed amongst this people than is elsewhere to be found previous to the Reformation. Nothing has been specifically recorded

respecting their congregational arrangements.\* Rejecting, however, as they did, the authority of synods and councils, the inference is necessary that their mode of church organization was characterized by the utmost simplicity. A true religious equality was observed amongst them, which led them to repudiate the domination of their own teachers equally with that of the Catholic church. Their prosperity was greatest in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. From the thirteenth we perceive symptoms of corruption, arising from a neglect of the apostolic writings, more especially those of the apostle Paul; until at last their religion was disgraced by the worship of the cross and the practice of sacrifice imported from the wilds of Tartary.†

Leaving the Paulicians, we now turn to our own country in the time of Wycliffe‡ and his followers, generally known by the name of Lollards,§ for the purpose of inquiring how far the principles of religious freedom were advanced by them. "Had Wycliffe," says a modern writer, "attracted the warm and mighty

\* Gibbon mentions something in respect to this point. "From the blood and ashes of the first victims, a succession of *teachers* and *congregations* repeatedly arose." This might be the case, yet without an intelligent conviction respecting the duty of congregational self-government.

† Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. liv.

‡ Born A.D. 1324, died Dec. 31, 1384.

§ From *lollen*, to sing with a low voice. The name originated in Flanders about the year 1300, in consequence of the practice of singing dirges at the funerals of those who died of the plague. These good Christians took a pious care of those who thus died, when all besides neglected them. The name was used afterwards as a term of reproach. See Mosheim's *Ecc. Hist.* cent. xiv. Part II. chap. ii. sec. xxxvi.

spirits then awakening around him, and could he have consorted with them, in plan and well-directed agency—that morning-star of the Reformation had not dwelt apart, but might have, like the lodestar, represented a universal influence, and shone the centre of a mighty constellation.” \* Probably no one man ever exerted a more legitimate and direct influence over the age in which he lived. His mission was that of the teacher ; and few, if any, owed less to adventitious circumstances in the diffusion of their principles. His path was that of a sunbeam amidst the darkness. The common-place eulogium, that he was before his age, is below the mark. His age was the age of Wycliffe, and succeeding ages all reap the benefit. No one aimed more deadly blows at the corruptions of Rome and her clergy. But this was a small achievement in comparison with his lucid exposition of the great truths of the gospel. The first principle of Independency, pertaining to liberty of private judgment, was asserted by him in the boldest manner, and fenced round with every variety of scripture argument. “ Christian men,” he writes, “ are certain of the reality of their faith by the gracious gift of Jesus Christ, and that the truth in the gospel was taught by Christ and his apostles, though all the clerks of antichrist say the contrary never so fast, and on pain of their curse, and imprisonment, and burning. And this faith is not grounded on the pope and his cardinals, for then it must fail and be undone, as they fail and are sometimes destroyed ; but it rests on Jesus Christ, God and man, and on the Holy Trinity, and so it may never fail except from his

\* Missions, by Richard Winter Hamilton, LL.D., D.D. p. 35.

default, who, while he should love and serve God, faileth in these things. Almighty God and his truth are the foundation of the faith of Christian men; and, as St. Paul saith, 'other foundation may no man set beside that which is set, that is Jesus Christ.' Therefore, though antichrist and all his clerks were buried deep in hell for their simony and pride, and other sins, yet the faith of the Christian faileth not, because these are not the ground thereof, but Jesus Christ. He is our God, and our best Master; and ever ready to teach true men all things which are profitable and needful to their souls. But they would have, that whatever their prelates teach openly and maintain steadfastly, were of as great authority, and even more than is the gospel of Christ. And thus they would destroy Holy Writ, and Christian faith, and at length maintain that whatever they do is no sin."\* "The law of God and reason," he writes elsewhere, "we should follow more than that of our popes and cardinals; so much so, that if we had a hundred popes, and if all the friars were cardinals, to the law of the gospel we should bow, more than to all this multitude." †

In reference to the Christian church he says, "when men speak of holy church, anon, they understand prelates and priests, with monks, and canons, and friars, and all men who have tonsures, though they live accursedly, and never so contrary to the law of God. But they call not the seculars men of holy church, though they live never so truly, according to God's law, and die in perfect charity. Nevertheless, all who shall be saved in the bliss of heaven are mem-

\* Vaughan's *Life of Wycliffe*, vol. ii. pp. 241, 242.

† *Ibid.* p. 247.

bers of holy church, and no more." And, again, "Christian men, taught in God's law, call holy church the congregation of just men, for whom Jesus Christ shed his blood; and not mere stones and timber, and earthly dross, which the clerks of antichrist magnify more than the righteousness of God, and the souls of men." \*

He agrees with the Independents in respect to the two orders of officers in the church. "By the ordinance of Christ, priests and bishops were all one. But, afterwards, the emperor divided them, and made bishops lords, and priests their servants; and this was the cause of envy, and quenched much charity. For the ordinances of Christ are founded in meekness, in unity, and charity, and in contempt of riches and high estate." Again, "I boldly assert one thing, namely, that in the primitive church, or in the time of Paul, two orders of the clergy were sufficient, that is, a priest and a deacon. In like manner I affirm, that in the time of Paul, the presbyter and bishop, were names of the same office. This appears from the third chapter of the first Epistle to Timothy, and in the first chapter of the Epistle to Titus. And the same is certified by that profound theologian, Jerome." †

He was an advocate for returning to the voluntary principle in supporting religion, more especially in the payment of Christian ministers for their good offices. "Would God," he exclaims, "that all wise and true men would inquire whether it were not better for to find priests by the free alms of the people, and in a reasonable livelihood, that

\* Ibid. pp. 313, 314.

† Ibid. p. 309.

they may teach the gospel in word and deed, as did Christ and his apostles, than thus to pay tithes as men are now constrained by a new ordinance of priests, to a worldly priesthood, ignorant and negligent. If this first ordinance of Christ and his apostles come again to Christendom, then shall Christ's people be free to withhold their tithes and offerings from wayward priests, and no more maintain them in sin." \*

At the same time he was not sufficiently enlightened to see, that Christ had by his apostles instituted local church organization as a perpetual ordinance of manageable self-government amongst Christ's people, which excluded synodical, diocesan, and secular authority by its very nature. Hence he allowed things in this respect to remain as they were. "Let the parochial boundaries in the ecclesiastical state remain; let the present system of patronage continue undisturbed; but let the men introduced to the care of souls, in such places, remember how it was with their predecessors in the year before Constantine, with the Master whose name they bear, and with the apostles whom they esteem it their honour to succeed. As thus appointed, let what they solicit from the magistrate be simply protection; and to meet the evils arising from the withholding of settled pastors from the established cures, and the many which must be inseparable from the appointment of improper men, let such priests as may prefer the labours of the evangelist to the more regular duties of the parochial shepherd, be allowed to act upon that preference, regulating their steps in all things, by the

\* Vaughan's *Life of Wycliffe*, vol. ii. p. 290.

necessities of the people and the prospects of usefulness." \*

From these particulars, we see how far Wycliffe had advanced unaided in that early age. The idea of the momentous results which would attend a revival of Independent congregational polity, on the platform of an apostolic order of things, never struck his mind. Neither he nor any reformers before him asked how it was that the churches of the apostolic age had no visible bond of ecclesiastical union and subordination. It is one thing to discern the fitness of an instituted order of things to accomplish a certain end, when attention has been directed to it; quite another to light upon the course of inquiry which leads to an appreciation of that fitness. The vast continent of the new world spread itself out over half the globe for ages before Columbus discovered its existence; and, once discovered, the wonder was that it had never been discovered before. So in respect to the Divine institution of Congregational Independency. The aptness of the analogy is not diminished by the circumstance that the New Testament always contained the record of the primitive rule of Christian fellowship and self-government. The record may lie open to inspection, and any one whose attention is directed to certain truths contained in it may discern them there at once; but it is possible for those truths to lie hidden and unappreciated for ages, unless peculiar circumstances turn the mind to them.

It is probable, however, that some of the followers of Wycliffe, even in his day, became practically independent, without any clear views respecting the nature

\* Ibid. pp. 300, 301.



of their proceedings, and simply as the result of following out the free impulses of their own spirits in respect to the advancement of Christ's kingdom. At the close of Wycliffe's life, they were very numerous. "Starting like saplings from the root of a tree," says a contemporary, "they were multiplied, and filled every place within the compass of the land." \* Like the members of the church of Jerusalem, they "went everywhere preaching the word;" supplementing the less acceptable labours of the popish clergy, and becoming curates of souls without emolument, but with large congregations and much success. "These preachers," says the same contemporary, "always pretended in their discourses to have a great respect for the law of God, or, as they expressed themselves, *Goddiss law*; to which they avowed themselves as strictly conformed both in their opinions and their conduct." Nay, more; "like their Master, they were too eloquent, and too much for other people, in all contentions by word of mouth. Mighty in words, they exceeded all men in making speeches, out-talking every one in litigious disputations. Both men and women, though never so lately converted to this sect, were distinguished by the same modes of speech, and by a wonderful agreement in the same opinions."

It is evident from these and many other testimonies, which might be adduced if they were needed, that the doctrines of Wycliffe were widely diffused. The opposition of the Romish clergy in England and on the continent of Europe, could not prevent their transmission from district to district, and generation to generation. The indignity done to the mortal

\* Knighton, Canon of Leicester, quoted by Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 188.

remains of the mighty dead forty-one years after they had been laid in the grave,—when, according to tradition, after being reduced to ashes, they were thrown into the Swift,—could not repress the influence of principles embalmed in the minds of so many of his countrymen. The very means employed to dishonour them, facilitated their diffusion. As Fuller quaintly observes respecting his ashes, that they were conveyed by the Swift into the Avon, by the Avon into the Severn, by the Severn into the narrow seas, and by the narrow seas into the main ocean ; \* so the truths which Wycliffe expounded were borne along through innumerable channels, and became the means of perpetuating and advancing Christ's spiritual kingdom in many lands. Many political and ecclesiastical changes calculated to retard the progress of religious freedom in our own country, intervened between the time of Wycliffe and the Reformation. The statute for the burning of heretics, † enacted in the reign of Henry the fourth, and the constitutions of archbishop Arundel, adopted by a convocation of the clergy about the same time, ‡ had for their object the extermina-

\* Fuller's Church Hist. of Britain, book iv. cent. xv.

† By this statute it was enacted, that when the sentence was duly announced "the magistrate shall take into hand the same persons so offending, and any of them, and cause them openly to be burned in the sight of all the people, to the intent that this kind of punishment may be a terror unto others, that the like wicked doctrine and heretical opinions, or the authors and favourers thereof, be no more maintained within this realm."

‡ These constitutions decreed, amongst other things, that all books written by John Wycliffe and others of his time, and all hereafter to be written, are to be banished from schools, halls, hospitals, and all places whatsoever, excepting such as may be approved by a council of twelve persons, to be chosen by one or both

tion of the Lollards. But instead of decreasing, they multiplied. "Who would have thought," says Fox, \* the martyrologist, "by these laws and constitutions, so substantially founded, so circumspectly provided, so diligently executed, but that the name and memory of this persecuted sect should have been utterly rooted up, and never could have stood? And yet, such be the works of the Lord, passing all men's admiration, that, notwithstanding all this, so far was it off that the number and courage of these good men were indeed vanquished, that they rather multiplied daily, especially at London and Lincolnshire, † Norfolk, and Herefordshire, in Shrewsbury, in Calais, and in divers other quarters more."

However numerous the followers of Wycliffe, it does not appear that any considerable advance was made on his peculiar principles. No records have reached us affording proof that his views respecting the relation subsisting between the ecclesiastical and temporal powers were confirmed by additional arguments, much less improved upon by further scriptural inquiry. Many noble spirits were prepared to suffer extreme punishment, rather than yield their faith up to this point, of whom Lord Cobham was an illus-

of the universities; that no man shall hereafter translate any text of Scripture into English upon his own authority; that men shall not presume to dispute on any of the articles determined by holy church; and that the strictest inquisition shall be made to prosecute all suspected of holding Wycliffe's doctrine under the "new and damnable name of Lollardie."—Vaughan's Wycliffe, vol. ii. p. 393, 394.

\* Acts and Monuments, i. 686, 687.

† Even so late as 1521, more than five hundred Wycliffites were cited before the bishop of Lincoln.

trious example.\* Many churches were gathered in the conventicles, or "schools" as they were then termed, in various parts of the country; and the fellowship which they enjoyed, secluded as they were from the observation of the clergy to avoid persecution, was necessarily congregational. But unless further evidence than has yet come to light assures us of the fact, it cannot be admitted as indisputable that the congregational polity was *recognized* as a scriptural institution.

Even in Bohemia, where the principles of the British reformer obtained so wide a diffusion, it does not appear that any advance was made in respect to congregational liberty. John Huss was an avowed follower of Wycliffe, and in no essential particular before his master. It is true he was charged with being affected with "the leprosy of the Vaudois;" but this, so far from disproving, confirms our judgment. His most obnoxious opinions were, that the pope is on a level with other bishops; that all priests are officially equal; that the clergy ought to be poor, subsisting on voluntary contributions; and that it is the right of all men to preach the word of God. While, therefore, we admire the meek fortitude of Huss in submitting to the stake,† we cannot avoid the conclusion that, if the reformation which he desired had been effected, much would still have remained to be undone, in order to the enjoyment of a primitive apostolic freedom in the church of Christ.

\* See Vaughan's *Life of Wycliffe*, vol. ii. chap. ix. for an admirable account of Lord Cobham's character, opinions, and martyrdom.

† Huss suffered July 6th. 1415; and Jerome of Prague on May 30th, 1416.

We now come to the period of the Great Reformation, respecting which so much has been written, and in relation to which so much antagonistic feeling exists, dividing all Europe, that it is difficult even yet to judge impartially of its true character and merits. Our reference to it, however, is simple and definite. We do not at present contemplate it as a theatre of action—an epoch in the history of European freedom transcending every other, whether before or since, in which every kingdom took part, and every power civil and ecclesiastical became necessarily involved. Neither do we refer to it as a starting point of new life for man in reference to Christian doctrine, momentous as we conceive it to have been in this respect.\* The measure we have to apply to it is the one we have already applied to antecedent movements in the history of the church—that of a primitive and unerring standard. The vast scale on which the Re-

\* The views of Sir James Mackintosh in reference to the Reformation are as far-sighted as any we have seen, and were the result of the ethical habits of his mind. "It was fortunate," he says, "that Tetzel found Luther busied in the contemplation of the principle which is the basis of all ethical judgment, and by the power of which he struck a mortal blow at superstition: 'Men are not made truly righteous by performing certain actions which are externally good; but men must have righteous principles in the first place, and then they will not fail to perform virtuous actions.' . . . The general terms which are here used enunciate a proposition equally certain and sublime; the basis of all pure ethics, the cement of the eternal alliance between morality and religion, and the badge of the independence of both on the low motives and dim insight of human laws. Luther, in a more specific application of his principle, used it to convey his doctrine of justification by faith; but the very generality of his own terms proves the applicability of the principle to be far more extensive."—*Hist. of England*, vol. ii. p. 139.

formation proceeded, the wonderful combination of circumstances which gave it success, the momentous results which attended and still attend it, the genius, and piety, and heroism, of the men who conducted it, are all irrelevant to the precise topic now under investigation. Referring our readers for information on these points to those authors who have conferred such a boon on our times by their writings on this portion of history, and in particular to the incomparable work of Dr. D'Aubigné, we are concerned to inquire how far the immediate results of the Reformation were characterized by the prevalence of right views respecting religious freedom.

Viewing the subject in this light only, we are compelled to acquiesce in the judgment of the philosophic historian, that "the Reformation was the first successful example of resistance to human authority," and little more. Gigantic as were the efforts of Luther in opposition to the church of Rome, and completely successful as they proved in liberating one half of Europe from an insupportable tyranny; it must, nevertheless, be confessed, that the liberty achieved in one direction was not completed in another, but has remained, even to the present day, an unfinished work. "Every Reformer has erected, all his followers have laboured to support, a little papacy in their own community. The founders of each sect owned, indeed, that they had themselves revolted against the most ancient and universal authorities of the world; but they, happy men! had learnt all truth, they therefore forbad all attempts to enlarge her stores, and drew the line beyond which human reason must no longer be allowed to cast a glance." \*

\* Mackintosh's Hist. of England, vol. ii. p. 132.

It is a singular circumstance that those who were sustained by the spirit of a conscientious integrity in opposing the pretensions of Rome, failed to apply their own principle afterwards when their opposition was crowned with success; and, however accounted for, remains as a fatal blemish in the work of the Reformer of the sixteenth century. Neither can it be questioned that a remarkable opportunity of bringing the great contest for religious freedom to a triumphant issue was thrown away mainly through the influence of the great Reformer himself. His faith in apostolic institutions was not equal to his faith in apostolic doctrines. He embraced the latter with all his heart, and was content that they should gradually develop their power in the believing soul. But of the suitability of the former to all the exigencies of the church and the world he had his doubts. In fact, he knew not their Divine adaptation to all the ends of Christian fellowship. When any one impugned his principle of "justification by faith alone," as one which might be turned to immoral uses, he put forth all his energy to repel the slander on a Divinely revealed truth, and to reduce his opponent to submission. But although the same Divine book from which he drew this "doctrine of a standing or falling church," delegated a self-governing power to Christ's people in every place where they might be gathered for fellowship, he either failed to perceive the fact, or doubted its universal obligation. He looked too much at the circumstances of the day, and too little at the pattern before him in the New Testament. Having rased to the ground the proud structure erected by man in the name of God, he became suddenly awed at the blank vastness of the area thereby

cleared, and instead of converting it into a seed-plot where truth might gradually spring up according to the Divine law of development, was too anxious to cover over the whole space at once. Hence the painful result—another merely human edifice in the place of the former.

The first ecclesiastical constitution produced by the Reformation was more scriptural than any that succeeded, and but for one element would have been perfect. It was framed "for the churches of Hesse, and in order that some other churches might be moved to the same course;" \* and may, therefore, be regarded as the model of the new churches of the Reformation.

Its chief provisions were as follows:—

"The church can only be taught and governed by the Word of its Sovereign Pastor. Whoever has recourse to any other word shall be deposed and excommunicated.

"Every pious man, learned in the Word of God, whatever be his condition, may be elected bishop if he desire it, for he is called inwardly of God.

"Let no one believe that by a bishop we understand anything else than a simple minister of the Word of God.

"The ministers are servants, and, consequently, they ought not to be lords, princes, or governors.

"Let the faithful assemble and choose their bishops and deacons. Each church should elect its own pastor.

"Let those who are elected bishops be consecrated to their office by the imposition of the hands of three

\* Schminke, *Monumenta Hassiaca*, vol. ii. p. 588. Quoted by D'Aubigné, *Book xiii. chap. iii.*



bishops ; and as for the deacons, if there are no ministers present, let them receive the laying on of hands from the elders of the church.

“ If a bishop cause any scandal to the church by his effeminacy, by the splendour of his garments, or by levity of conduct, and if, on being warned, he persists, let him be deposed by the church.

“ Let each church place its bishop in a condition to live with his family, and to be hospitable, as St. Paul enjoins ; but let the bishops exact nothing for their casual duties.

“ On every Sunday let there be in some suitable place an assembly of all the men who are in the number of the saints, to regulate with the bishop according to God's Word, all the affairs of the church, and to excommunicate whoever gives occasion of scandal to the church ; for the church of Christ has never existed without exercising the power of excommunication.

“ As a weekly assembly is necessary for the direction of the particular churches, so a general synod should be held annually for the direction of all the churches in the country.

“ All the pastors are its natural members ; but each church shall further elect from its body a man full of the Spirit and of faith, to whom it shall entrust its powers for all that is in the jurisdiction of the synod.

“ Three visitors shall be elected yearly, with commission to go through all the churches, to examine those who have been elected bishops, to confirm those who have been approved of, and to provide for the execution of the decrees of the synod.” \*

\* *D'Aubigné's Hist. of the Reformation*, Book xiii. chap. iii.

From this it is apparent that the Reformers, in the first instance, admitted the principle of the church's self-government as something with which the state might not interfere; and each local church was vested with powers greater than were ever enjoyed before. The great defect in this constitution consisted in the synodical authority attached to the congregational, which necessarily limited the latter, and tended to rob it of all vitality. The error committed in the third century, and which operated so disastrously in subsequent periods, was thereby introduced again, and with the same effects. In the course of time, six superintendents for life were substituted for the three annual visitors; one change after another subverted the independence of the local churches; and ultimately the original constitution was converted into a system of spiritual despotism.

Although Luther, at one time, seemed to acquiesce in the principles of the above constitution, he afterwards wavered to a great degree, and finally adopted another system. In 1523, when the Bohemians needed ministers, he wrote to them:—"If you have no other means of procuring pastors, rather do without them, and let each head of a family read the gospel in his own house, and baptize his children, signing after the sacrament of the altar as the Jews at Babylon did for Jerusalem. First, seek God by prayer; then, being assembled together with all those whose hearts God has touched, choose, in the Lord's name, him or them whom you shall have acknowledged to be fitted for the ministry. After that, let the chief men among you lay their hands on them, and recommend them to the people and to the church." \* This was a good

\* Ibid.

beginning—an acknowledgement of the power and right of the Christian people; and probably, if the secret convictions of Luther's mind had continued to sway his conduct, he would have proceeded in his work of re-construction more or less in this spirit. But he became alarmed, and leaned to other counsel than that of God's Word and his own heart. Multitudes who had joined the Reformers, both priests and people, had no religion of their own. They had simply joined in the opposition to Rome; and when successful in that, were as little inclined to bow before Luther as before Clement. "Alas!" said the Reformer, "they have abandoned their Romish doctrines and rites, and they scoff at ours." Instead of calling upon all his confederates to commence with evangelizing efforts in the spirit of the gospel, leaving it to truth and God's blessing to raise up a people, he was impatient, and called in the aid of "the powers that be" to accomplish the necessary work. "Your highness," he said, addressing the Elector of Saxony in 1526, "in your quality of guardian of youth, and of all those who know not how to take care of themselves, should compel the inhabitants, who desire neither pastors nor schools, to receive these means of grace, as they are compelled to work on the roads, on bridges, and such like services. The papal order being abolished, it is your duty to regulate these things: no other person cares about them, no other can, and no other ought to do so. Commission, therefore, four persons to visit all the country; let two of them inquire into the tithes and church property, and let two take charge of the doctrine, schools, churches, and pastors." \* The elector

\* D'Aubigné, book xiii. chap. iii.

yielded; the commission was appointed; Melancthon was appointed to draw up the necessary instructions; the commissioners discharged their task; and a great error was perpetuated, which, if not immediately visible in its results, was felt in due time, and is in operation to this day.

It is unnecessary to refer to further events in the concluding period of the Reformation. The protest of Spires,\* the conference of Marburg,† the confession of Augsburg,‡ are all-important incidents in the progress of events. But they were all connected with a more than tacit understanding that, in some shape or other, human authority might determine points of faith

\* This protest, which is the origin of the term Protestant, was delivered on the 19th April, 1529. The language was,—“We protest by these presents, before God, our only Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Saviour, and who will one day be our judge, as well as before all men and all creatures, that we, for us and for our people, neither consent nor adhere in any manner whatsoever to the proposed decree, in any thing that is contrary to God, to his holy Word, to our right conscience, to the salvation of our souls, and to the last decree of Spires.” The princes of the empire who entered this protest, were John, elector of Saxony; George, elector of Brandenburg; Ernest and Francis, Dukes of Lunenburg; the landgrave of Hesse; and the prince of Anhalt.

† This conference was held in the castle of Marburg, in October 1529, at the instigation of Philip of Hesse. Its object was to bring the Swiss and German reformers to articles of agreement, that there might not be any appearance of division amongst them. The historian of the Reformation has depicted the scene in his usual graphic manner, book xiii. chap. vii. The Marburg articles were the first bulwark against Rome erected in common by the Reformers. Luther and Melancthon represented the Germans, Zwingle and Oecolampadius the Swiss.

‡ This confession was drawn up by Melancthon, and presented to the emperor Charles amidst circumstances of great excitement on the 25th of June, 1530.

and dictate in matters of religion to Christ's people. Even the diet of Spire, in 1526, which allowed each state to manage its own ecclesiastical affairs until a general council should be called by the emperor, delegated to the princes of Germany, in their respective dominions, that authority which had previously been exercised by the Roman Catholic church. And yet this was considered the period in which the greatest amount of liberty was enjoyed—a three years' cessation of that constitution-mongering to which the Reformers of that and succeeding ages have been so much given.

The immediate results of the Reformation, although so widely different in the specific forms of ecclesiastical organization adopted by the various Protestant countries, were all marred more or less by the same prevailing error. The Lutheran or "Evangelical church," the earliest offspring of the Reformation, clothed the civil rulers of every state with a spiritual supremacy, and acknowledged the authority of the councils, or consistories, appointed by the sovereign to watch over the interests of religion. Amidst all the changes of this church, the vitiating element remained for ever after; and the name of Luther, the liberator of conscience, has been attached to a system in many respects as objectionable, on grounds of principle, as the papacy itself.

The confession of Augsburg is a noble confession, and associated with one of the most stirring scenes in the history of Germany, and in the struggle for religious liberty. "Many," says the last article, "have unskillfully confounded the episcopal and the temporal power; and from this confusion have resulted great wars, revolts, and seditions. It is for this reason, and

to re-assure men's consciences, that we feel ourselves constrained to establish the difference which exists between the power of the church and the power of the sword.

"We therefore teach, that the power of the keys or of the bishops is, conformably with the Word of the Lord, a commandment emanating from God, to preach the gospel, to remit or retain sins, and to administer the sacraments. This power has reference only to eternal goods, is exercised only by the minister of the Word, and does not trouble itself with political administration. The political administration, on the other hand, is busied with everything else but the gospel. The magistrate protects, not souls, but bodies and temporal possessions. He defends them against all attacks from without, and, by making use of the sword and of punishment, compels men to observe civil justice and peace.

"For this reason we must take particular care not to mingle the power of the church with the power of the state. The power of the church ought never to invade an office that is foreign to it; for Christ himself said, '*My kingdom is not of this world.*' And again: '*Who made me a judge over you?*' St. Paul said to the Philippians, '*Our citizenship is in heaven.*' And to the Corinthians: '*The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God.*'

"It is thus that we distinguish the two governments and the two powers, and that we honour both as the most excellent gifts that God has given here on earth."

This is a noble discrimination between things that differ, and would appear to include all that is desired even by the warmest advocates of religious freedom.

Yet the authors of the confession did not intend by this instrument to cut themselves off from the patronage of the civil power, as their subsequent conduct proved.

Again ; in reference to private judgment, the language of the same article of the confession would appear to be explicit. "The duty of the bishops," it proceeds to say, "is therefore to preach the gospel, to forgive sins, and to exclude from the Christian church all who rebel against the Lord, but without human power, and solely by the Word of God. If the bishops act thus, the churches ought to be obedient to men, according to this declaration of Christ, '*Whoever heareth you heareth me.*'"

"But if the bishops teach anything that is contrary to the gospel, then the churches have an order from God which forbids them to obey. And St. Augustine himself, in his letter against Pertilian, writes : 'We must not obey the catholic bishops, if they go astray, and teach anything contrary to the canonical Scriptures of God.'"

If we set this part of the confession in the light of Luther's own conduct, whether at Marburg or elsewhere, we shall be compelled to infer, that it could not mean all that it seems to express ; seeing that no man was more bigotted than he in respect to his own interpretation of Scripture ; no man less willing to allow a private departure from it, on any article of conceived importance.

Although, therefore, the Confession of Augsburg was retained amongst the standards of the Lutheran church, it must be regarded very much in the same light as some of the articles of the Church of England ; as conveying sentiments which were to be interpreted in their

meaning, and limited in their operation, by other articles, or other parts of the general system. The actual result, so far as the Lutheran or evangelical church is concerned, was a change of masters and authorities, in many important respects for the better; but still only a change, with the prospect of further struggles at some future day. The roaring and dashing tide, after reaching the highest point, quietly subsided into the ancient bed; and authority, under new forms, still maintained its hold upon the spirit and conscience of man.

The same may be said of the "Reformed" churches, so termed in distinction from the Lutheran.

Zwingle in Switzerland laboured hard for a pure faith and a simple Christian worship, and was to a great degree successful. But he committed a fatal error in respect to the manner of accomplishing and perpetuating this desirable object. He became a political as well as ecclesiastical leader; incorporated the church with the state; made the clergy civil functionaries, and placed them with due subordination of ranks under government control. He went farther than this. With mistaken policy and zeal he sought to compel all the Cantons to accept the religion of the Reformation. His death on the battle field, in the garb, not of a minister, but of a warrior, was a striking lesson on the sin and folly of attempting to establish the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus by the most carnal of all weapons.\*

\* The narrative of the death of Zwingle is one of the most touching scenes in D'Aubigné's *History of the Reformation*. See book xvi. chap. viii. It is hardly true, however, to say that "Luther and the German Reformation declined the aid of the temporal power." The circumstances of Germany and Switzerland



The genius of Calvin was more potent than that of Zwingle, and its results were more widely celebrated. To the present time his name is associated with the theological opinions of a great portion of the protestant communities. But it is with the church principles of Calvin alone that we have to do.\* The immediate effects of his influence in Geneva,—where the affairs of the church were committed to his direction, and where he enjoyed the power of a bishop, presiding over the assembly of the clergy and in the consistory,—are sufficiently indicated by the terms of the inscrip-

were widely different. In the former, the reformed religion was established without bloodshed; in the latter it was retarded by an intestine war. But what led to the peace of Augsburg in 1555? Is it probable that Charles would have altered his whole line of previous policy in relation to the Protestants, if he had not been surprised at Inspruk by the army of Maurice? The emperor's letters to Rome before this time breathe out threatenings and slaughter against the Reformers, as D'Aubigné has shown. (Book iv. chap. xii.) But the treaty of Passau, and the peace of Augsburg followed immediately upon Maurice's decisive conduct. If Charles had been less fearful of consequences, the whole empire might have been embroiled in a dreadful war, in comparison with which the wars of Switzerland would have been insignificant. Such a war would have been called the war of the Reformation. Happily it was averted; but not by passive obedience. The cause of faith was not altogether won by faith. See Mosheim's *Ecc. Hist.* cent. xvi. sect. i.

\* "The followers of Calvin assumed the designation of the reformed church, perhaps with the intention of marking more strongly that they had made more changes in church government than their protestant brethren. A Calvinist and a presbyterian became in England synonymous terms. The word Calvinist now denotes all who, in any Protestant communion, embrace the doctrine of absolute predestination. It is synonymous with predestinarian. Many episcopalians are now Calvinists; many presbyterians are anti-Calvinists." Mackintosh's *Hist. of England*, vol. ii. p. 144.

tion on the walls of the City Hall of Geneva. It was as follows :

“ In the year 1535, the tyranny of Roman Anti-Christ having been overthrown and its superstitions abolished, the most holy religion of Jesus Christ was established here in its purity, and the church better organized, by an extraordinary blessing of God. And at the same time, this city itself having repulsed its enemies and put them to flight, was again set free, but not without a remarkable miracle. The council and the people of Geneva have here erected this monument to perpetuate its memory, so that the testimony of their gratitude toward God should descend to their posterity.” \*

This inscription, which remained for nearly three centuries, or from 1536 to 1798, on the walls of the City Hall, was a standing memorial, not only of the remarkable miracle, but also of the relation which subsisted between the church organized by Calvin and the state of Geneva. “ The views and projects of this great man,” says Mosheim, “ were grand and extensive. For he not only undertook to give strength and vigour to the rising church, by framing the wisest laws and the most salutary institutions for the maintenance of order, and the advancement of true piety, but even proposed to render Geneva the mother, the seminary of all the reformed churches, as Wirtemberg was of all the Lutheran communities. He laid a scheme for sending forth from this little republic the succours and ministers that were to promote and propagate the Protestant cause through the most distant nations, and aimed at nothing less than

\* Lutheranism and Calvinism. D'Aubigné's *Discourses and Essays*, Collins, p. 287.

rendering the government, discipline, and doctrine of Geneva the model and rule of imitation to the Reformed churches throughout the world. The undertaking was great, and worthy of the extensive genius and capacity of this eminent man; and, great and arduous as it was, it was executed in part, nay, carried on to a very considerable length, by his indefatigable assiduity and inextinguishable zeal.”\*

Instead of incorporating the church with the state, as Zwingle had done, Calvin sought to make the church a separate and independent body legislating for itself, yet with the sanction and protection of the state as its avowed ecclesiastical co-ordinate. This was a favourite idea of the Genevese reformer, and of those who in various countries have followed his system.† It has been deemed the nearest approach to religious liberty compatible with state alliance; and has been supposed to be the fairest compromise between the civil and ecclesiastical powers ever broached in theory. Practically, however, it proved, and is ever likely to prove, an impossibility. The selection of one church with a definite creed and a specific ecclesiastical system to the exclusion of all others, implies not only a power of determining matters of faith and order, but a condemnation of every other church.‡ Thus mere protection, when afforded to

\* Ecc. Hist. cent. xvi. sect. iii. part ii. The success was visible mainly in Holland, France, and Scotland. Germany and Switzerland were divided on the subject, never won. England was continually agitated, but the political element generally prevailed.

† The disruption of the Scottish church is the latest proof of the practical impossibility of an independent state church. The leaders of the free church, however, still cling to this theory.

‡ The late Professor Vinet has argued this point generally, in the most forcible manner, in his *Essay on the Profession of Per-*

one religious party in the state only, is an injustice which sooner or later manifests itself. It was so in the case of Geneva. The laws of the church respecting excommunication were enforced by the aid of the secular power, and those parties who lay under the ban of the church were treated as if they had committed a civil as well as ecclesiastical wrong. Not only was the arm of power employed to carry out the sentence of the church in reference to offenders against morality; but the opponents of Calvinistic doctrine were, in many instances, excluded from the privileges of citizenship, and even from the

sonal Religious Conviction; and upon the Separation of Church and State considered with reference to the fulfilment of that duty. "Society (he observes), or more strictly speaking, the state, which seems to have renounced the persecution of creeds, has not yet renounced their protection; and perhaps it will be expected that, having protested against persecution, we shall accept of protection with avidity. Yes, it is most true, that we desire that the profession of religious convictions should be protected; but protected as the common right of all, and consequently without distinction of creeds. We are not desirous that any particular creed should be protected, nor, in general, believers to the exclusion of unbelievers. We deprecate protection for the same reason that we deprecate persecution. For the right of protection necessarily involves the right of persecution. . . . You tell us that you desire only protection; that you abhor persecution: but the distinction is idle. You condemn yourself to submit to it, and, what is worse, to make use of it. Yes, whatever the modesty of your pretensions, or the weakness of your disposition, rest assured you will persecute; every protected religion has ended by persecuting; nay, even when oppressed, even when trodden under foot, it has persecuted. It has received, as the price of its own liberty, the power of trampling upon other liberties, which in their subjection could yet eclipse it. . . . The more serious the religion, the more it is the result of conviction; the greater the importance attached by its followers to the knowledge and profession of its doctrines, the stronger will be the temptation."

walls of Geneva itself. Thus a power of protection led to acts of great injustice, to be revenged at some future day.\*

The ecclesiastical system adopted by Calvin assumed to be that of the primitive church; from which, however, it was, in fact, a wide departure. It was what is known under the name of presbyterian; and is essentially the same with that which prevails in Scotland to the present day. The individual and the congregation had some power in following their own conscientious convictions; but their liberty was nullified in any period of difference, by the superior power of the presbytery and synods. The apostolic churches were independent communities, over which no foreign authority had any control. The self-government was not in the churches as a confederated whole, but in each separate church. Calvin, however, introduced a superintending and controlling power, which, although representing in its members the opinions of the several congregations to some extent, decided by majorities on all points of dispute, and thereby infringed upon Christian liberty. This system was not incompatible *then* with an alliance with the state, nor with gross acts of tyranny over individuals and churches; and the same may be said of the system generally, wherever it has since prevailed.†

\* See A Summer Ramble in Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland, by John Massie, D.D., pp. 445—468, on the miserable condition of Geneva in the present day. The system of Calvin has been worked round by political changes into a complete subversion of the doctrine of Calvin, and the establishment of unitarianism.

† See vol. i. pp. 189—196, for an account of the first introduction of synodical, in contravention of congregational, authority.

It is unnecessary, after this review of the principal systems, which resulted from the Reformation, to inquire further respecting such as were, more or less, akin to them.\* Suffice it to say, that in none was there an intelligent recognition of the rights of conscience, much less of that congregational self-government which was instituted by the apostles in order to their preservation. While there was much of appeal to Scripture as the final judge of controversy, and great resistance to the pretensions of Rome, there was practically too much submission to human authority in the interpretation of those Scriptures, and too much deference to the new power, whether secular or ecclesiastical, by which the former had been supplanted. In fact, the Reformation was of necessity an incomplete, because a preliminary work. Its leaders had been nursed amidst the workings of a despotic system; and, although sufficiently alive to its evils to throw off the yoke, were not prepared with another to occupy its place. To pull down and to build up are not only two widely different processes, but frequently require the very opposite order of genius.† The doctrinal errors and the superstitious

The term *presbyterian*, as applied to this system, is an assumption similar to that of *baptists* as assumed by the anti-pædo-baptists. The congregational churches have their presbyters or bishops also. See vol. i. pp. 46—56.

\* It is scarcely necessary to refer to the Reformation of the church of England, since it originated with the monarch from the basest of motives, and resulted in an insular papacy, of which Henry the Eighth was head.

† Luther knew his own unfitness for the work of building up, and confessed it in the most honourable manner. He did not aspire to be an universal genius. Hence his manifold concessions to Melancthon, not always to the advantage of the popular cause.

practices of the church of Rome were the main objects of attention regarded by the Reformers of the sixteenth century ; and, consequently, when it was needful as the result of success to set up something organic instead of the Romish hierarchy, they were generally at fault. Luther had scarcely made up his mind. Melancthon was for retaining everything not decidedly objectionable in the former system ; Zwingli handed over the church to the decision of the civil power ; Calvin established a mistaken interpretation of the primitive organization ; while Henry the Eighth transferred the power of the pope to his own sceptre.

On reviewing, then, the history of religious freedom previous to the revival of Independency, for the purpose of ascertaining what was aimed at and accomplished, we are unable to discern any where, except amongst the Paulicians, and amongst them only under peculiar circumstances, the complete recognition of the principles of religious liberty as Divinely eliminated and instituted. In every period we see more or less of resistance to authority, as the result of a kind of instinctive love of liberty, or as the consequence of strong convictions opposed to dominant theological dogmas. In every period we discern the footsteps of witnesses for "the truth as it is in Jesus," in conflict with, or in more unobserved separation from, constituted ecclesiastical authorities. In many periods we hear the Word of God appealed to as the source and final standard of truth in matters of religion, to the exclusion of human authority and tradition ; yet more frequently in reference to matters of doctrine than of discipline and organization. In one period—that of the Reformation—we behold a successful attempt to

liberate the consciences of men from the overawing superstitions and antiquated oppressions of the church of Rome ; the result of which is a new political and ecclesiastical division of the European nations into Popish and Protestant, and the throwing up of a high-way for the future march of civil and religious freedom. But in all the past, we discover nowhere a complete recognition of those Divine exponents of religious liberty which indicate how far Christ's people have the right, individually and socially, to govern themselves in the management of their religious affairs. The autonomy, or self-government, claimed for the church by such men as Calvin, by not going far enough in respect to the state, and by going too far in respect to ecclesiastical jurisdiction, was not the kind of autonomy sanctioned by Christ's word : was not the kind of Independence essential to the enjoyment of the highest possible religious liberty. The church's independence of the state, as advocated by such parties, was purely nominal ; the state being called upon, not merely to recognize it, but to become its subservient and patron, executing its corporate will, making civil arrangements for its support, and even undertaking to inflict penalties on its supposed delinquents. Its self-government, as an incorporation of aggregated churches, involved an usurpation over individual and congregational rights, and was accompanied from time to time by the grossest acts of persecution and civil wrong. In consequence of erroneous associations connected with it, the principle of liberty of private judgment, or of individual Independence, was seldom understood aright, and never consistently carried out. Practically, it was liberty only to think and act according to the views of an ecclesias-



tical majority ; and even those who echoed the cry of "The Bible, the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants !" were not unfrequently found amongst the ranks of the persecutors, either in fact or by connivance. The true connexion between civil and religious liberty was very little understood ; and the Divinely indicated relations subsisting between the individual and the local church, the local church and the churches generally, or in the aggregate, and between all these and the civil powers, were scarcely known. The subject was never thoroughly investigated. The Scriptures were never studied from the right point of view in reference to it. Existing institutions and organizations were the point from which the entire question was argued ; and as they were all erroneous, the great principles of religious freedom, in all their bearings, were never thoroughly comprehended.

The principal source of misconception was that which originated the defection in the early history of the church, and which still holds captive so many minds otherwise enfranchised, namely, the idea of the necessity of a visible catholicity amongst all the followers of Christ. The Romish church adhered to its ancient purpose of embracing the world in the arms of an actual unity. The Protestant churches, although their protestantism was a denegation of it, still clung to the favourite dogma, and sought to promote it in their fraction of the general whole. If all the church could not be one, at least each separate church must be one ; and if there could not be actual unity in all things, there must be unity in essentials. Such were their views. They began, therefore, at the wrong end. Instead of permitting truth to operate freely in the minds of men, thereby developing its results in a living unity of

conviction and consentaneousness of religious practice ; instead of waiting patiently, as nature waits, for the elaboration of fruit in the genial autumn of the year, they sought to institute the unity in the first instance, and then bring it about actually by creeds and confessions, by a system of association involving inter-dependence on the part of individuals and congregations, and by a confederation of ecclesiastical parts in a visible whole, which inverted the true order of things, and departed from the genius of the gospel. Christ had, in effect, said, through the institutions recorded in his word, " Let each individual follow ME. Let all my followers in the same locality associate freely together for true fellowship, without dictating to one another, and remembering that I am sole Master. Let all such local societies be united, as need may arise and occasion serve, yet without subordination, and without yielding up individual and congregational Independence to any general authority. Thus shall ye come to true unity, by the truth revealed, by the Spirit poured out from on high, and by the cultivation of a genuine Christian temper towards one another. Thus shall my prayer be fulfilled ; and in the end of the world ye shall be matured and ripened into a perfect development : ye shall ALL be ONE." But the opposite course was followed. The end was made the starting point ; and the result was, as might have been anticipated, a formal unity in every Protestant state of Europe, with real division, manifold schisms, and abundant persecution.

## CHAPTER II.

### CAUSES CONNECTED WITH THE REVIVAL OF INDEPENDENCY IN ENGLAND.

WHATEVER may have been the progress of religious freedom before and after the period of the Reformation, it must be admitted that the principles of Independency never met with any systematic advocacy, until the reign of Elizabeth. There may have been instances of congregational worship and government previous to that period; but this arose from peculiar circumstances, rendering such a mode of organization expedient. A number of Christians cast upon a desert island, or forced by persecution to seclude themselves from their fellow-men, would be almost compelled to act as a congregation, in the first instance. But this might be the case, without any discriminating adoption of congregational principles in contradistinction from all others; and therefore, in the course of time, the very same parties might, without inconsistency, have recourse to other and opposite forms. As we have already observed, such probably was the case in the age immediately succeeding that of Wycliffe \*, and in other periods, both antecedent and subsequent. There is no existing proof, however, that such parties espoused the principles of

\* See back, p. 30.

congregational Independency, as forbidding every system which had the tendency to supplant them by an extension of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction beyond the local community. Even in the church constitution of Hesse \*, intended to be the pattern for the churches of the Reformation, and certainly the most liberal of all that were suggested or adopted in that age, we find the purely congregational element overborne by arrangements of a synodical and even semi-episcopal nature. In fact, up to the period we have specified, there was no intelligent recognition of the system of congregational Independency, as scripturally provided, and therefore as suited to all the possible circumstances of the Christian church. Many attempts were made to advance and extend the liberties of Christian men. Many schemes were framed to secure an adjustment between liberty of conscience and the authority of an ecclesiastical aggregate, designated the church. Many problems were entertained, and partially solved, respecting the limits of official power and personal Independency, in order to a mutual conjunction and harmony. But the Divine expedient, revealed in the primitive institutions, was never apprehended; and its simple solution of the difficulty, though completely answering all the requirements of the case, was scarcely thought of. The Divine plan of regulating the church was too simple and unassuming to be appreciated, until the proper time.

It is important to inquire into the causes of the delay which attended the discovery of the lost truth, as well as the causes of the discovery itself. The fact, unexplained, operates as an objection to the truth of

\* Ibid., p. 37.

the system to which it relates, and has undoubtedly been so considered by the abettors of other views. A seeming novelty is attached to principles really ancient, unless it can be shown that there were reasons for their eclipse during a long night of darkness, as well as for their reappearing at a certain season of advancing dawn. It becomes the historian of principles, assumed to be apostolic, to show some reason for their total neglect during any very protracted period in the history of a church where, on the hypothesis, they once had paramount place, and for whose permanent guidance they were provided. In this department of his work he is bound to become the truthful advocate, if only for the purpose of showing that his narrative relating to modern periods, is only the fragment of a great whole, and that, as a fragment, it was broken off from the main entirety by causes which can be explained; just as geographers argue for the ancient continuity between our island and the continent of Europe by indicating the causes, still apparent, which might have occasioned their separation; or, as a geologist might argue for the primitive homogeneousness of the earth's crust by the very causes still in operation, sufficient in themselves to break it up into its divisions of land and water.

The point thus mooted is similar to the one so often mooted respecting Protestantism in general; and not only demands, but is capable of receiving a similar settlement. In answer to the question, Where was your religion before Luther? some have satisfied their own minds by referring to the Bible; others have gone more largely into the discussion of the subject, and have endeavoured to show that the protestant doctrine has been held in every period of the

church\* ; while others, without affirming or denying the last particular, have shewn that as there are traces of a gradual advancement towards protestant doctrine in the periods immediately preceding the Reformation, so there are traces of a gradual departure from protestant doctrine in the periods succeeding the age of the apostles†. It is not our present business to say which of these answers is the most correct, or whether the whole of them may not be true. We have, however, to deal with something more specific than Protestantism, and to show that it not only existed before the age of Elizabeth, but that its modern history is only a continuation of that which relates to its origin and early progress. If it can be shown, as is the case, that Independency was the order of things instituted in the first age of the church by inspired men ‡ ; that it was gradually departed from after their decease, yet not for some time after§ ; that in proportion as it was departed from, the professed church departed also into every species of doctrinal and practical error || ; that as a reaction took place, and errors were discerned, and liberty received, there was a gradual approximation towards this system once more ; and that at last the long lost truth was discovered anew, and advocated as the elements of a system, and the characteristic principles of a sect, and thenceforth, notwithstanding adverse circumstances, diffused and handed down from one generation to another, reaching to

\* Gilly's Waldensian Researches ; Allix's Hist. of the Albigenses, &c.

† Waddington's History of the Church, pp. 354, 705, note.

‡ Vol. i. book i. of the present work.

§ Ibid. book ii. chap. ii.

|| Ibid. chap. iii. iv. v.

our own times, with fresh confirmation of its importance, in every successive period;—if this can be shown, then we think there is so much positive and cumulative evidence that the system so distinguished is Divine, and destined ultimately to prevail. So far from regarding Independency as a heresy, and the Independents as a sect, dating their origin from the sixteenth century of the Christian era; we shall be compelled to reverence the system as an essential part of Christianity itself, and its modern advocates as the honoured successors of those apostles and primitive Christians, who knew no other custom\*, and followed no other rule. As the continuous existence of the sun is a truth unhesitatingly believed, notwithstanding his temporary absence during the night, because of his reappearing in the lustre of an undiminished glory; so the continuous existence of Independency, as a Divine system, is unaffected by those circumstances, in connexion with the moral revolutions of the world, which during so long a period, and to such an extent, eclipsed its light. It once shone throughout the long morning of the brightest era that ever dawned upon the world. And what if the darkness of a long and dreary night succeeded! The institutions of Moses suffered a similar neglect, and the book of the law was lost during a protracted period of corruption and idolatry. The doctrines of a greater than Moses were supplanted by monstrous errors in the bosom of a church professing to be Christian, during a yet longer period; and were cherished only by a despised and persecuted succession of outcasts, “of whom the world was not worthy,” and whose history

\* 1 Cor. xi. 16.

is, even to the present day, and by protestant historians, recorded under the head of heresy.\* Such facts are only melancholy proofs of the depravity of our race, while the revival of forgotten truth is a token that God has visited us again in his mercy, in order to restore us once more to the saving influences of his own word.

When the lost book of the law was discovered in the reign of Josiah, and read before him, we are informed that "it came to pass when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes, and commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying, Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for *them that are left* in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, BECAUSE OUR FATHERS HAVE NOT KEPT THE WORD OF THE LORD, to do after all that is written in this book."† Such was Josiah's view of the past neglect which had been paid to a Divine law. Instead of regarding with complacency the period when other than Divine principles prevailed in Israel, he was overwhelmed at the thought that the word of the Lord had not been kept. And for the tenderness of heart and the humiliation of spirit thereby evinced, he was exempted from the penal consequences of disobedience which reached all besides.‡

\* Mosheim, Waddington, &c. Is it not time that *protestant* historians, at least, should render honour to whom honour is due, by ceasing to class the witnesses and confessors of the truth under this head?

† 2 Chronicles, xxxiv. 19—21.

‡ Ibid. 23—28.



In a similar spirit, should the long reign of anti-christ be regarded by all who appreciate protestant doctrine, which is no other than revived primitive truth. In a similar spirit should the departure from apostolic institutions be regarded by all who acknowledge their Divine authority. So far from deeming the long period of neglect an argument against their former prevalence, it should be considered as only another proof of the perverseness of the human race,—parallel in the history of the Christian church with that to which we have adverted in respect to the Jewish,—and demanding equal humiliation and sorrow. If, in consequence of not keeping “the words of the Lord,” the errors and crimes which occupy so much space in ecclesiastical history arose, and multiplied, and perpetuated themselves from age to age, to such an extent that the name of Christianity came to be associated with the worst forms of evil; the fact ought to be deplored, as one of the greatest calamities that ever happened either to the church or the world.

It is admitted, however, that the same influence which led mankind to depart from what was primitive and Divine, may also lead some to take an erroneous view of the changes through which the professed church of Christ has passed. As in the days of Josiah the previously corrupt state of the Jewish church might have been held up as the pattern, instead of that of the days of Moses and Joshua; so now the corruptions of past centuries may be referred to as the model, instead of the simple and comparatively perfect condition of the churches in the first age. All that we can do, in order to disabuse the mind of such a perverted view of the case as this, is to refer to the records of the New Testament and of the earliest age. If con-

viction is not to be obtained thence, it can be obtained nowhere: and those who reject such evidence must be left to the "strong delusion," under which, unhappily, they have come. Where, however, conviction is, in the first instance, produced by this appeal to the only infallible guide, the history of the church affords materials for strengthening the conviction and maturing it into a state of absolute certainty.

As in a former portion of our work we have traced the gradual departure of the church into anti-christian error, deducing from the series of changes by which it was attended an argument in behalf of the view we have taken of the original state of things; so now we propose to describe the gradual return to what was lost, for the purpose of completing the argument, in so far as it may be historically deduced. If it can be shown that light gradually dawned upon the world, in a manner directly the converse of that in which it had previously declined; if it can be shown that one advance was made after another, until at length a complete or nearly complete view was acquired of the primitive doctrines and institutions of the apostolic age; then we think a degree of unity is given to the church's history which cannot otherwise be obtained, and in that unity our entire case is established. The course we thus follow becomes continuous and one. We first trace the stream from its source, where it runs pure and undisturbed, until it reaches a region where it can no longer be discerned, in consequence of the luxuriant, overshadowing growth of corruption and error; and then we perceive it emerging from this stage of its progress, until at last all its original elements reappear.

Those events which are usually regarded as predis-

posing causes of the Reformation, may also be reckoned amongst the remoter antecedents of that more essential reformation to which our subject refers. The revival of learning, the general diffusion of knowledge, the greatly increased activity of mind in speculative matters, and the circulation of the Scriptures, were all essential preparatives to more correct modes of thinking in reference to religion. The two chief pioneers, of a purely instrumental kind, were the invention of paper in the twelfth century,\* and of printing in the fifteenth.† By these means the materials of knowledge were widely diffused. Not only were the universities, colleges, and grammar schools more cheaply supplied with books, but the people generally were stimulated to habits of reading by the less costly means of self-instruction thereby provided. Wherever the simple elements of learning had been communicated, a power was created which might now be exercised to any extent in self-cultivation and improvement. But the principal thing contributing to a thirst for knowledge, especially of a religious kind, was the circulation of the holy Scriptures. 'Long before the time of Luther there were multitudes of

\* Paper made from cotton is thought to have been in use in the ninth century; but not for manuscript books, and scarcely at all in Europe. The earliest instance of the use of paper made from linen is in 1100. It was not until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that paper was much in use as an ordinary writing material. Hallan's Introduction to the Literature of Europe, vol. i. pp. 72-78.

† Block printing was common in the fourteenth century, and amongst the Chinese had been practised from time immemorial. Costar and Gutenberg divide the claim to have been the inventor of moveable type. Schæffer, however, who was a workman employed by Gutenberg, appears to have been the inventor of the method of casting metal types—without which the invention would have been of comparatively little service.

Bible readers in our own country ; and although laws were enacted which condemned Wycliffe's translation,\* as well as that of John de Trevisa,† to be sought out and burnt, there can be no doubt that a great number of copies escaped the flames, and became the means of secretly spreading and perpetuating a scriptural faith and worship.

The Reformation itself was a most powerful means for good ; preparing the way for further and more perfect changes, quite irrespective of the immediate results attending it. It was impossible for such an agitation as that which it involved to be conducted on so large a scale, and by such prominent agents on both sides, without affecting the general character of the public mind. The lethargy of ages was broken in upon, and all classes of men were compelled to think, feel, act, in reference to matters of religious nature, as they had never done before. It was the dawn of a new era for the human race. The conflict between light and darkness then assumed, for the first time, a character of earnestness and reality. Not only were antiquated superstitions overthrown, and monstrous corruptions purged away, but the method in which these things were accomplished, was the commencement of a new system of schooling for the nations of Europe. Comparatively speaking, up to this period authority, undisputed or nearly so, had dealt out what

\* Vaughan's *Life of Wycliffe*, vol. ii. chap. ii. Knighton said of this noble work of benevolence, "The jewel of the church is turned into the sport of the people, and what was hitherto the principal gift of the clergy and divines, is made for ever common to the laity."

† Fuller's *Church Hist. of Britain*, book iv. cent. xiv. sect. 43 to 45. He was a secular priest, and vicar of Berkeley.

was considered to be truth, and all that the people had to do, was to receive the instructions imparted with implicit submission. Henceforth, however, the circumstance that the world was ranged on two sides in a great religious struggle, compelled all, more or less earnestly, to inquire for themselves. Although, therefore, in the course of a few years after the commencement of the conflict, a kind of armistice was agreed upon between the contending parties;—the papists on the one hand retiring within the boundaries of a retrenched dominion, and the protestants on the other, settling themselves down as they best might, on their newly recovered territory;—yet the agitation never practically ceased. The example which had been set on so prominent a theatre could never be forgotten. The resistance offered to authority of the most powerful kind had been effectual, and encouragement was thereby given to attempt at least a similar resistance in every case of oppression. Moreover, the great principle which the Reformers had used as their potent weapon, both for attack and defence, was one which it was not difficult either to comprehend or to use in after times, and in every succeeding conflict. The Reformers of the sixteenth century, after securing their object, might depart from their great principle of liberty of private judgment, and even erect the tribunal of their own authority in the place of that which they had demolished; but other parties could not so easily forget the past. If the power of *Rome* might be successfully opposed by carrying the appeal to Scripture alone, as the only authority in matters of religion; so might the power of Wittemburgh and Geneva, and for the same reason. *It was not* likely that those who had cheered on the

Reformers in their conflict against authority would, for any long period, be deluded into a state of submission to the newly-acquired authority of the Reformers themselves. Under various pleas, the Lutheran and the Reformed churches might procure a partial acquiescence in their claims to dictate to the human conscience, and prescribe to the human spirit; but it would, sooner or later, become apparent, that the more thoughtful and earnest were not so willing to depart from the precedent which the conduct of the great leaders in the Reformation had set before them. So far from returning to the ancient servitude from which they had been liberated, inquiry would be directed to the question as to the best means of perpetuating the liberty secured, in harmony with the maintenance of those peculiar duties relating to order, fellowship, and worship, which Scripture seemed to impose upon all Christian men.

On inquiring into the actual state of things immediately after the Reformation, we find that the great problem, the solution of which was almost universally attempted, had reference to this latter point. Although the Reformation, as a struggle, had not come upon the world unawares, seeing that it was only the last of a series of conflicts against Roman domination; yet it must be allowed, that the Reformers, and none more so than Luther himself, were much better qualified for the work of pulling down than of building up. They did not anticipate the difficulties that would ensue upon the success of their endeavours. Regarded in this light therefore, the Reformation was a surprise; and many a painful and prolonged conflict was involved in the very victory secured. The attention of thoughtful men had, for

some time previous to the sixteenth century, been directed to the corrupt usages, superstitions, and tyrannical usurpations, connected with Romish ascendancy; and a great part of Europe was prepared to sympathise with the German liberator and his confederates, when they manfully commenced their warfare against the spiritual despotism that prevailed. But few, if any, had directed their attention to the political and ecclesiastical principles which were involved in the securing of right, and the perpetuation of liberty. The questions which respected the relation between the church and the civil power, and between liberty of private judgment, as it affected the individual, and as it affected official parties in the church, and the authority of the church at large, had never been duly considered. The consequence was, as we have intimated in a previous chapter, a series of partial and imperfect experiments, in which the fault committed by Rome in respect to an usurped authority, was repeated and confirmed. Although we are, in some measure, able to account for the fact, as we have done, it must stand out as a remarkable instance of inconsistency on the part of successful Reformers, that when they had the power in their hands of securing the liberties of Christian men, and of perpetuating the disenthralment of the Christian church from every species of bondage for ever, they should be the very parties to re-institute, under one form or another, the evil against which they had contended.

In Germany, Switzerland, and England, the result of the Reformation was, virtually, a mere transfer of authority. As far as doctrine was concerned, a *great change had been effected*. The lessons of the gospel

were restored to their primitive place, instead of the corruptions of priestcraft. As a necessary consequence, the mode of worship also was simplified. But while truth was exchanged for error, the authority by which that change was effected, was still inconsistent with correct views of Christian liberty and political justice. Hence much dissatisfaction arose, from time to time, at the practical results attending the great struggle for freedom. The more active thinkers amongst the people, if not the ministers of religion themselves, felt that all had not been secured which had been promised ; and many an attempt was made to ascertain the reason for so manifest an imperfection. More particularly was this the case in periods of divided sentiment on religious matters ; and in the bosom of minorities many pointed questions originated, respecting the justice of that authority which determined what was truth and what error, simply by means of a preponderance of numbers. That these were the results actually attending the establishment of the Lutheran and Reformed churches, is well known ; and in them we perceive the elements of a wholesome agitation, preparing the way for those inquiries which led to the revival of Independency. While, on the one hand, the repetition of the error committed by Rome amongst the churches of the Reformation, led to a re-action in favour of Romish ascendancy ; on the other hand, it compelled thinking minds to push their inquiries yet further in the right direction, with a view to ascertaining the true scriptural basis and defences of religious freedom.

On turning our attention to England, as the place where Independency once more arose as a revived system, it is natural to inquire if there were any cir-



circumstances in relation to the origin and progress of the Reformation here, which prepared it to become the theatre of such a revival. Nor are we disappointed. It will appear to any one acquainted with the periods to which we refer, that there were many events and causes sufficient to account for what transpired in the reign of Elizabeth. Let the following circumstances have weight in relation to this topic.

It is scarcely needful to say, that the Reformation in England, under Henry the Eighth, originated in anything but sympathy with the German and Swiss Reformers. The personal views of the monarch, which could not be accomplished so long as England was subservient to Rome, led the way to a sudden disruption. Had Henry been an ordinary man, the power of Rome would never have been resisted. It was to accomplish his own degrading objects, rather than to benefit his people, or to act in accordance with the dictates of an enlightened conscience, that he ranged himself on the side of the Reformers. The doctrines, and most of the corrupt practices of the church of Rome, were retained. Even the monasteries themselves would have been spared, but for the opposition which was feared from those who dwelt within them, and the wealth which might be transferred to the royal treasury. In a word, Henry's aim was to become the pope himself in his own dominions. That the people were prepared for such a change, was a favourable circumstance; but is no cause for astonishment. A jealousy of foreign authority had long been the characteristic of the English people. A virtual separation between England and Rome in all matters not purely ecclesiastical, had *now, for some time*, been a peculiar feature of the

policy of England. And, although many in the ranks of the clergy and the priesthood were unfavourable, the nation at large were prepared to forego their ecclesiastical predilections in favour of their political, and in subserviency to the will of the monarch. In addition to this it should be remembered, that, scattered amongst the people at large, were a not inconsiderable number who sympathised with the continental Reformers on religious grounds alone; most of them being the remote followers of Wycliffe and his disciples, the Lollards of a previous age. Thus the comparatively easy manner in which the Reformation was effected, may be accounted for. It becomes apparent, however, in the course of a few years, that the Reformation effected by Henry was attended by an agitation of the public mind not likely to settle itself down in such a shape as mere state policy might determine. So soon as England ranked amongst the opponents of Rome, it became the ally of the other reformed nations. A sympathy sprang up between these and the English. The influence of the continental Reformers told most powerfully upon the better protestantism of England, and gave it a more positive and well-defined form than it would otherwise have assumed. Thus a conflict was commenced between the truly protestant part of the community, and that which clung with more or less fondness to the customs and ascendancy of Rome; and although during this reign, in consequence of the state of parties, no spirit of inquiry was promoted which could be said to be in advance of that exhibited on the continent, yet the first step was taken in a series of changes likely to issue, some future day, in important practical results.

In the reign of Edward the Sixth we perceive a further advance of the principles of the Reformation, in matters more purely religious. The work which Henry had commenced on political grounds, was now conducted more entirely on ecclesiastical grounds. Many things which had been left unreformed in a previous reign, were now corrected, and matters of doctrine were settled on a more scriptural basis, according to protestant principles. The monarch himself, probably, had a religious desire to do that which was right, so far as his own convictions carried him, and Archbishop Cranmer evinced an anxiety to complete that which had been so imperfectly accomplished under his former master. Had the reign of Edward been more protracted, and had it not been succeeded by that of Mary, it is probable that the protestant element of the church of England would have been more simple, and more in accordance with that of the other reformed churches, than was actually the case. At the same time, even under this reign, the principle of persecution was fearfully admitted,\* as essential to the church's existence and prosperity; and many intrepid spirits were led not only to doubt, but also to remonstrate, against the justice of legislating for conscience in matters of religion. Many parties in the State were anxiously inquiring as to the scriptural principles by which the church of Christ should be guided in the promotion of its own interests; to which the circulation of the scriptures in the latter part of Edward's reign afforded increased stimulus. On the whole, therefore, the general tendency of

\* For example, Joan Boucher, whom Cranmer burnt for heresy, notwithstanding the reluctance of Edward to sanction the crime. See Hallam's Constitutional Hist. of England, vol. i. pp. 131, 132.

those events which happened at this period was in favour of a better order of things.

The reign of Mary witnessed a complete reversal, suddenly effected, of all that had been done in the previous reigns. England was again at the feet of Rome as her ecclesiastical vassal. The pope and his emissaries were once more the recognised masters of the English mind. Persecution lighted up her fires and exercised her tortures. Everything protestant was rooted up, and as far as possible destroyed. Those "of whom the world was not worthy," were again compelled to retire from observation in obscure retreats, and "in caves and dens of the earth." A period of gloom and darkness, irradiated only here and there by that light which shone in secret, and which was visible only to the eye of Omniscience, took the place of the former state of things. To judge from outward appearance the hopes of England were gone for ever; and the sad reverse which happened seemed likely to discourage all future attempts at reformation. We shall greatly err, however, if we take this superficial view of matters. Following, as it did, two reigns in which protestantism had triumphed by means of political power alone, it taught the whole nation one great lesson at least, namely, that if religion is to be dependent upon the authority of the monarch for its character and its permanency, there is no hope for mankind. But, in addition to this, those parties who flocked to the continent\* in order to avoid persecution and martyrdom, were brought into contact with more thorough Reformers than any that had publicly appeared in England, and were, in

\* Strype (iii. 107) reckons the emigrants at 800, and amongst these the Duchess of Suffolk, first cousin of the Queen.

many instances at least, prepared in exile to listen to the instructions of those who befriended them with special candour, and to examine the entire question of ecclesiastical polity, as they would never otherwise have done. At Geneva, Frankfort, Zurich, Strasburg, and elsewhere, they were led to discuss matters of doctrine and of discipline with new attention and with more exclusive deference to the authority of the scriptures than they would have shown in their own country, if the successor of Edward the Sixth had been a protestant instead of a papist. They could not but reflect often and deeply upon that mode of settling the religion of a nation, which had terminated in so disastrous a manner for themselves and the cause of truth. Moreover, while these refugees were imbibing new views respecting religious liberty on the continent, many less timorous, or less favoured, remained behind in England, who, in their secret meetings, not only sought to worship God according to what they conceived to be the directions of his word, but were led to carry on many thoughtful inquiries respecting the manner in which that word prescribed for the maintenance of religion and for the organization of Christ's church.

Special notice must here be taken of certain circumstances which transpired at Frankfort, inasmuch as on that ground a party contest was protracted, in which something more than mere protestantism was involved. The two parties who afterwards divided the English nation, were not only represented, but may be said to have had their origin, in the troubles of this place ;\* while the unsatisfactory issue of the struggle

\* Such, at least, is Fuller's view of this strife : " We will be *somewhat large,*" he writes, " and wholly impartial, in relating this

naturally led to those deeper inquiries respecting the fundamental principles of church polity, which favoured the revival of the primitive system.\* The first settlers at Frankfort, in 1554, obtained from the magistrates of that city the use of the French church, on condition that they "should not dissent from the Frenchmen in doctrines or ceremonies, and that they should approve and subscribe the same confession of faith that the Frenchmen had then presented, and were about to put into print."† This condition, however, was afterwards allowed to bear such a construction, that a compromise was effected. The English order, according to Edward the Sixth's Service Book, was adopted, with some omissions and alterations; a minister and deacons were chosen to serve for a time; and letters were addressed to their brethren in Strassburgh, Zurich, Densburgh, and Emden, inviting them to remove to Frankfort, to participate in their privileges. This invitation was given in the hope of their being able to agree in the institution of a permanent discipline. "Let us all mark," said the letter, referring to the language of the apostle Paul, in the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians, "that he saith not that God hath left the scriptures only, that every one should read them, but also, that he hath erected a policy and order, that there should be some to teach, and not for one day, but all the time of our life."†

sorrowful accident; the rather, because the penknives of that age were grown into swords in ours, and their writings laid the foundations of the fightings now-a-days."—Church Hist. of Britain, book viii. cent. xvi. § 42, 43.

\* History of the Troubles at Frankfort. Reprint from the black letter edition of 1575, p. 6.

† Ibid. p. 12.

A correspondence ensued, which terminated in a refusal to comply with the invitation, on various grounds. The Strasburgh brethren in particular, required the use of King Edward's service book; the reason advanced being, "lest by much altering of the same, we should seem to condemn the chief authors thereof, who, as they now suffer, so are they most ready to confirm that fact with the price of their blood, and should also both give occasion to our adversaries to accuse our doctrine of imperfection, and us of unstability, and the godly to doubt of that truth wherein before they were persuaded, and to hinder their coming hither, which before they had purposed."\* Eventually a service was adopted which was taken in part from the Geneva, and in part from the English service book; and the afterwards celebrated John Knox was chosen as their minister. This order of service, however, was only temporary; and all disputes which might arise meanwhile, were appointed to be referred to some of the most eminent reformers of the day.† Great harmony ensued, which would probably have continued, but for the arrival of Dr. Richard Cox,‡ and other exiles from England, who seemed bent upon enforcing the English service upon the congregation, in opposition to the determination of the church. From this period a series of divisions and painful contentions arose. Dr. Cox's party managed, in the end, to procure the expulsion of Knox, in a most ungenerous manner. Soon after the accession of Mary, Knox had written a book entitled,

\* History of the Troubles of Frankfort, p. 23.

† Calvin, Musculus, Martyr, Bullinger, and Vytet.

‡ Cox had been tutor to Edward the Sixth.

"An Admonition to Christians," in which he reflected on the conduct of the emperor, as a supporter of popery. This book was presented by Dr. Cox's party to the magistrates, as a proof of his treasonable disposition. The magistrates entertained a high respect for Knox's friends, and discerned the baseness of the charge; but being subjects of the emperor, they were compelled to notice it; and therefore to shield him from evil consequences, advised him to leave the city. Knox prudently acted upon the advice, and retired to Geneva. Although, however, the party who were so enamoured of their English service book, had got rid of their chief opponent, there were many others, and amongst the rest, Whittingham, who were prepared to take up the quarrel. The contention continued, and the two parties at last separated, the friends of Knox following him to Geneva. At the death of Mary, Cox and the rest returned to England, to continue a similar struggle there, only, under greater favour from the civil power, and not without substantial recompense. He and some of his associates were made bishops under Elizabeth, and persecuted the puritans in England with more effect than they had been able to do in Frankfort.\*

We refer to these events not so much on account of any interest which the reader might take in the case itself, as for the purpose of showing on a small scale the working of principles of an opposite kind amongst the protestants of that day. In King Edward's reign a division, more or less similar, existed, in consequence of the twofold origin of the Reforma-

\* Cox afterwards came under the Queen's displeasure for covetous practices.—Fuller's Church Hist. of Britain, book iv. cent. xvi. § 28—34.



tion in this country. Even then, the party which sided with the monarch, and which viewed the Reformation in a political light, were found ranked among the friends of formalism and ceremonial, semipopish rites, ecclesiastical subordination of ranks, and whatever else might connect Christianity with a worldly show of things. Those, however, who regarded the Reformation in a religious point of view, and who made the scriptures their practical rule of faith and worship, were found favouring a more simple mode of worship, in which mere ceremony was important only as tending to "decency and order;" and advocated a system of ecclesiastical government in which the Christian people were allowed to exercise some degree of religious liberty. The truly religious party, however, had never been placed in circumstances favourable to their principles and aims during the reign of Edward. The political element was at that time more powerful than the ecclesiastical. As in a previous reign, the truly religious were, if not in a minority as to numbers, yet virtually so, in consequence of their want of influence at court. The result was, that the abettors of a formal religion had an advantage which made them proud and contemptuous, as well as assuming, towards those who were more worthy. That this was the case is evinced by the relative position of the two parties at Frankfort. Both of them were English; but they brought with them very much of the relative feeling in respect to one another, which had characterised them previously in their own country. While Knox, Whittingham, and the rest had all the advantage of more enlightened religious principles, and even in point of numbers were much superior to their opponents, they

seemed to pay them a kind of hereditary deference, greatly disproportioned to the just demands of the case. Dr. Cox and his party on the other hand, seemed to forget that they had crossed the seas and entered upon a neutral territory ; and whilst pursuing a most unjust line of conduct towards the congregation which had admitted them to its number in so charitable a manner, seemed to act with as much assumption as if they thought they were still backed by the court of Edward and the dignitaries of a church now annihilated. Thinking men, however, would draw from this example just inferences in respect to the unfair manner in which ascendancy might be gained over truth and justice by petty manœuvring and pretence. They would be led to see, that even on neutral ground it was possible for erroneous principles to become established over just and scriptural ones, wherever the liberties of a Christian people were not shielded and protected by something more than the absence of persecution and even the favour of the magistracy. In a word, the tendency of those events which happened at Frankfort, of which so many parties were interested spectators, would be to lead the minds of men into a further inquiry respecting the true scriptural basis of freedom for Christ's people, as discovered in the principles of the church's constitution. All this was favourable towards a revival of the great principles of individual and congregational Independency.

On the whole then, it was not surprising, that in the reign of Elizabeth there should be, on the part of many, a disposition to enter upon that peculiar line of investigation which led to Brownism in the first instance, and afterwards to a more perfect

comprehension of the apostolic institutions in reference to church organization. To us, looking back upon the past, and seeing how nearly men in different periods came up to right views in respect to this matter, it appears at the first sight strange, that for so long a time they failed to arrive at them. But we are reminded of other cases, in which similar approximations to important discoveries have been made, which were, nevertheless, approximations only. The invention of printing was often all but discovered before the time of Schæffer. The idea of a new world sometimes engaged the thoughts of men before its discovery by Columbus. The practical appliance of steam power, for the purposes of locomotion, was often approximated in a series of experiments, before it was actually effected. The theory of gravitation, and the discovery of the harmonies of the solar system, often tempted the speculative mind to entertain them, before the age of Newton. In reference to all these matters of invention or discovery, it may often seem strange to us now, that the world was so slow in lighting upon them. So in relation to the revival of Independency. The age and the hour were both fixed, in the purpose of Him who controls the events of time, and directs the human mind in all those processes of inquiry which lead to important results affecting the destinies of men and the interests of His church. All that we can do, historically, is to trace those antecedents in the actual history of the race which usher in important discoveries, whether in the department of science, art, or revealed truth, and to point out the precise period of discovery itself. Before we proceed to this point, however, we must take notice

of an opinion which seems to run somewhat counter to the views we have advanced, in relation to the period in which Independency revived in this country.

It has been affirmed that there were Independents before the time of Elizabeth, distinguished by their principles and proceedings from all other religious parties.\* It becomes us, therefore, to adduce and examine the testimony relied on as evidence of the fact, lest we should be chargeable with post-dating the revival of Independency in our country. The language of Penry, of whom we shall hear more shortly, is advanced in favour of this opinion. In a paper dated Edinburgh, April 30th, 1593, he tells Queen Elizabeth, that "in all likelihood, if the days of your sister, Queen Mary, and her persecution, had continued until this day, the church of God in England had been far more flourishing than at this day it is."† And again, in another place he writes, "It is well known that there were then in London, under the burden, and elsewhere in exile, more flourishing churches than any now tolerated by your authority."‡ To this general statement a more particular reference is added, respecting some actual congregations which

\* "There were Independents when there were Lollards, when there were Puritans, when there were Nonconformists. They were not bound up with any of these, whether considered as sects of Christian communion, or as indexes of current belief. The congregational organization went on, whatever might be the vicissitudes around it. Others debated the question of establishments: it is scarcely necessary to say, that Independency always opposed them, being incompatible with them."—Sermons by R. W. Hamilton, D.D., second series, p. 635.

† Pagitt's Heresiography, in Hanbury's Historical Memorials, relating to the Independents, vol. i. p. 15.

‡ Ibid.

had their existence in different parts of England, more especially in Norfolk, Suffolk, and London. Fox, the martyrologist, informs us of a congregation, consisting of about thirty members, that met in a house in Bow churchyard, and of their being surprised on New Year's day, 1555-6, and afterwards committed to prison. Their minister, Mr. Rose, was committed to the Tower, two days after, by the Bishop of Winchester, who was at that time Lord Chancellor.\* The same author informs us of another congregation that met in Islington, at the Saracen's Head. Mr. John Rough, who first joined himself to them in November, 1557, became their chosen minister, and a person of the name of Cuthbert Simpson was elected to the office of deacon. In December of the same year, at the suggestion of one of their number who acted the part of a Judas amongst them, they were surprised by the Vice-Chamberlain of the Queen's household, and both minister and deacon were burnt alive.† In addition to these statements the words of Sir Walter Raleigh in his speech in Parliament in April, 1580, are adduced for the purpose of indicating how far certain principles obnoxious to the established clergy had spread over England at that early period. "In my conceit," said the courtier and statesman, "the Brownists are worthy to be rooted out of the commonwealth; but what danger may grow to *ourselves* if this law pass, it were fit to be considered. For it is to be feared that men *not guilty* will be involved in it. . . . If two or three thousand Brownists meet at the sea, at whose charge shall they be transported,

\* Acts and Monuments, vol. iii. p. 114.

† Ibid. pp. 860—864.

or whither will you send them? I am sorry for it, I am afraid there are near twenty thousand of them in *England*, and when they be gone, who shall maintain their wives and children?" \*

From this last statement it is inferred, that before the time of Browne there must have been at work in the public mind a considerable leaven of principles essentially identical with his. Sir Walter, however, may have used an obnoxious name, without much discrimination, for the purpose of stigmatizing the parties who had most openly separated themselves from the established church. With respect to the other statements, it must be admitted that in themselves they do not contain sufficiently positive evidence of the point to be proved. All that can be justly inferred is, that in Queen Mary's days, and in the early part of Queen Elizabeth's, there were congregations holding their meetings separately, and, in some measure, following apostolic precedent in respect to the functions of church officers, and their election by the members of the congregation. Before we are entitled to affirm that those congregations understood and acted upon independent principles, recognised as such in their exclusive character, we must know more respecting them than has come down to us. It might be that the secrecy with which they were compelled to act, arising from the persecution to which they were exposed, reduced them to the congregational system as the only alternative. It might be that under other circumstances the very same parties would have acted in another way inconsistent with congregational principles strictly so termed. The reasoning we have already

\* D'Ewes Journal, p. 517.

urged holds good here. The Lollards were accustomed to hold their separate meetings for fellowship and worship in the age of Wycliffe; but, probably, because no other course was open to them. The church at Frankfort, to which we referred in the last chapter, was in fact a congregational church, self-governed and separate from all others; but the principles maintained by the members of that church were in no period strictly congregational. If Knox and his party had had the opportunity, they would have connected the church with a presbyterian and extra congregational system. Cox and his party, on the other hand, had occasion offered, would have brought the congregation under the superintendence of a diocesan episcopate. Similar remarks may be made with respect to many, if not most of the congregations composed of English exiles on the Continent. We conclude, therefore,—without affirming that it was so,—that the various congregations in England, in Queen Mary's days and in the early part of the reign of Elizabeth, might have been the result of expediency rather than principle. Neither should we forget the testimony of Robinson, who lived only a few years after,—and who certainly understood what congregational Independency was,—in respect to these very parties. "That which they add," he observes, "of 'sundry secret congregations in Queen Mary's days, in many parts of the land,' is but a boast. There were very few of them in any. But where they say, that these 'did upon Queen Elizabeth's entrance openly profess the gospel,' it is untrue; there was not one congregation separated in Queen Mary's days, that so remained in Queen Elizabeth's. The congregations were dissolved, and the people in them

bestrewed themselves in their several parishes where their livings and estates lay. The circumcised were mingled with the uncircumcised; whence came that monstrous confusion against which we witness. And show me one of your ministers continuing his charge in Queen Elizabeth's days, over the flock to which he ministered in Queen Mary's days, the persecuted gospel? It is certain the congregations, whether many or few, were all dispersed; and that the members of them joined themselves to the profane apostate papists, where their outward occasions lay. As, then, a handful or bundle of corn shuffled into a field of weeds, though in itself it retain the same nature, yet cannot make the field a corn field; so neither could this small handful of separated people in Queen Mary's days sanctify the whole field of the idolatrous and profane multitude in the land, by their scattering themselves amongst them." \*

Putting all these facts together, we think the evidence is not sufficient to prove that Independent principles were in any case acted upon, as the basis of that congregational worship which certainly prevailed. There *may*, however, have been individuals who deduced those principles in private from the writings of the New Testament; and there certainly was a preparedness of mind, on the part of a large number, for the reception of such principles, whenever they might be first expounded. Amongst the puritans there were various degrees of conviction, and a considerable amount of mutual toleration, in respect to what the scriptures were supposed to teach, both as to doc-

\* Robinson's Justification of Separation, 1610, p. 460. Hanbury, i. 16, 17.



trine and polity.\* It was then, as now, an observable fact, that great differences existed as to the grounds on which the established religion was opposed. Some were moved by scruples only, others by principle. Some objected to canonical habits, and other matters of mere ceremonial; others objected to the absence of discipline, and the multiplication of offices and orders. One party thought it inexpedient that so much of the popish system should be retained; while another party deemed it essential that the church should be ordered and governed according to the apostolic pattern. Thus a great diversity of opinion characterised those who were generally classed under the general designation of puritans; and the prevailing temper of the times was such as to lead men to yet further inquiry respecting the true basis of the church's constitution and organization. Moreover, the circumstance that Elizabeth was as intolerant towards those who differed from the established protestant religion, as Mary had been towards those who rejected popery,† would naturally lead men to think that the true principle of religious freedom had not yet been discovered; and many began to ask themselves whether it was essential to the perpetuity and prosperity of Christianity, that its claims should be adjusted in subordination to those of the state.

\* Price's Hist. of Protestant Nonconformity, chap. viii. vol. i. pp. 197—203.

† The number of those who suffered for religion in Mary's reign has been variously estimated. Grindal calculates it at 800 in the first two years of the persecution, Fox at 284, and Strype at 288, besides those "that died of famine in sundry prisons." Lord Burleigh, or Burghley, says, in his book entitled *The Executions for Treason*, "Four hundred persons suffered publicly in Queen Mary's days, besides those who were secretly murdered in prison."

When the fires of persecution, and the severities of imprisonment for conscience sake, became associated in the minds of the people with a dominant protestantism, men would not be long in coming to the conclusion that the evil most to be deprecated, inasmuch as it led nearly to all the rest, was the connexion between church and state.\* Thus, political as well as ecclesiastical circumstances impelled the human mind onwards in its inquiries after truth.

In corroboration of these views, we refer to the recorded examination of those who were brought up for trial on various charges relating to ecclesiastical disobedience. The spirit and temper of the judicial inquisitors, on the one hand, and the fearless exposition of the sentiments of the prisoners, on the other, develope a state of unsettledness in the public mind favourable to the growth of inquiry. The examination of Mr. White, a citizen of London, who had been imprisoned for not frequenting his parish church, is a memorable instance. His examiners were the Lord Chief Justice, the Master of the Rolls, the Master of the Requests, the Dean of Westminster, the Sheriff of London, and the Clerk of the Peace. On the 18th of January, 1573, he was introduced to court, and the examination was as follows:—

*Lord Chief Justice.*—Who is this?

*White.*—White, an't please your honor.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—White, as black as the devil!

*White.*—Not so, my lord; one of God's children.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—Why will you not come to your parish church?

\* The first sufferers in Elizabeth's time were the Dutch Baptists, John Wielmacher and Hendrick Ter Woort, who were burnt in Smithfield, July 22, 1575.

*White.*—My Lord, it is my desire to frequent the places of preaching and prayer: neither did I refuse my parish church, for I did not only frequent the same, but also procured diverse godly men there to preach; and as I said when I was last before you, since my last troubles about these matters, I was never absent from my parish church, being at home, in health, and at liberty.

*Mr. Gerard.*—You have not usually frequented your own parish.

*White.*—I grant I have more used other places, where I was better edified.

*Gerard.*—Will you come to your parish to hear prayer, though there be no preaching?

*White.*—I crave the liberty of a subject; and if I do not publicly use both preaching, and prayer, and sacraments, and behave myself as a Christian, deal with me accordingly.

*Master of the Rolls.*—Nay, you must answer yea, or no.

*White.*—You know my mind. I would avoid those things which be a grief to me, an offence to others, and the only disturbance of the quiet state of our church.

*Dean of Westminster.*—What one thing can you find fault with in the common book?

*White.*—Let them answer that to whom it more appertaineth, for being in prison almost a whole year about these matters, I was, notwithstanding, upon a statute touching that book indicted, and before I came to liberty almost outlawed.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—Thou art a contemptuous fellow and wilt obey no laws.

*White.*—Not so, my lord; I do and will obey laws,

and therefore refusing but a ceremony of conscience, and not refusing the penalty for the same, I rest still a true subject.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—The Queen's Majesty was evil overseen that you were not made of counsel, how to make laws and orders for religion.

*White.*—Not so, my lord; I am to obey laws and orders warranted by God's word.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—Do the Queen's laws command anything against God's word?

*White.*—I do not say so, my lord.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—Yes, marry do you; and there I will hold you, by your leave.

*White.*—Only God and his laws be absolute and perfect; all men and their laws may err.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—This is one of Shaw's darlings; I will tell thee what, I will not speak anything of affection, for I know thee not, saying by this occasion; thou art the wickedest and most contemptuous person that came before me since I sat in this commission.

*White.*—Not so, my lord; my conscience doth witness with me otherwise.

*Master of the Requests.*—What if the Queen should command to wear a grey frieze gown, would you come to the church then?

*White.*—That were more tolerable than that God's ministers should wear the habit of his enemy.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—How, if she should command to wear a fool's coat and a cock's-comb.

*White.*—That were very unseemly, my lord, for God's ministers.

*Dean of Westminster.*—You will not be obedient to the Queen's proceedings.

*White.*—I am and will be obedient.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—Yea, you say so ; but how are you obedient when you will not do that she commandeth ?

*White.*—I have said I would avoid only those things which have no warrant in God's word, and are either condemned or written against by the best reformed churches. Neither are they within the compass of St. Paul's rule, to serve for order, peace, comeliness, and edification, but the flat contrary.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—He would have no laws.

*White.*—If there were no laws, I hope I would live like a Christian.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—Thou art a rebel.

*White.*—Not so, my lord ; a true subject.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—Yea, I swear by God, thou art a very rebel, for I see thou wouldest draw thy sword, and lift up thy hand, and wouldest arise to rebel against thy prince if time served.

*White.*—My lord, I thank God my heart standeth right toward God and my prince, and God will not condemn, though your honor hath so judged.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—Take him away.

*White.*—I would speak a word, which I am sure will offend, and yet I must speak it. I heard the name of God taken in vain ; if I had done it, it had been a greater offence than that I stand here for.

*Gerard.*—White, White, you do not behave yourself well.

*White.*—I crave your worship show me wherein, and I will crave pardon and amend it.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—I may swear in a matter of charity.

*White.*—There is now no such occasion. . . . .

But forasmuch as I am so charged, and that it is bruited that at my last being before you I did deny the supremacy of my prince, I desire your honors and worships, with all that be present, to bear witness that I acknowledge her Majesty the chief governor next under Christ, over all persons and causes within her dominions, and to this I will subscribe. . . . I acknowledge the substance of doctrine and sacraments to be sound and sincere; and so I do of rites and ceremonies, as they agree with the word of God.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—The best in England shall understand of you. Take him away.

*White.*—My lord, I would to the Lord Jesus my committing to prison these two years might procure these matters to be indifferently conferred upon and decided by God's word, and the judgment of other reformed churches.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—You shall be committed, I warrant you.

*White.*—I pray you, my lord, let me have justice. I am, as I have said, unjustly presented, and I know the jury did not so present me, but that it is done by the malice of some; wherefore I desire to have a copy thereof.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—You shall have your head from your shoulders; have him to the Gate-house!

*White.*—I pray you, commit me to some prison in London, that I may be near my house.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—No, sir, you shall go thither.

*White.*—I have paid fines and fees in other prisons; send me not where I shall pay the like again.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—Yes, marry shall you; that is your glory.

*White.*—I desire no such glory.

*Lord Chief Justice.*—It will cost you twenty pounds, I warrant you, before you come out.

*White.*—God's will be done !

"Thus," says this persecuted man, "I was had to the Gate-house." \*

Another example,—in which a more complete development is afforded of the respect which the puritans paid to Scripture, and what they conceived to be the truth,—is to be found in the case of Mr. Axton, a year or two before the last. Mr. Axton was the minister of Morton Corbet, in Leicestershire, and was cited into the bishop's court three times in the year 1570. The closing part of the examination was as follows :—

*Bishop.*—Now, *Mr. Axton*, I would know of you, what you think of the callings of the bishops of *England* ?

*Axton.*—I may fall into danger by answering this question.

*Bishop.*—I may compel you to answer upon your oath.

*Axton.*—But I may choose whether I will answer upon oath or not. I am not bound to bring myself into danger ; but because I am persuaded it will redound to God's glory, I will speak, be the consequence what it will ; and I trust in the *Holy Spirit*, that I shall be willing to die in defence of the truth.

*Bishop.*—Well, what do you think of my calling ?

*Axton.*—You are not lawfully called to be a bishop, according to the *Word of God*.

*Bishop.*—I thought so ; but why ?

\* M.S. p. 176—178. Price's Hist. of Nonconformity, vol. i. pp. 285—287.

*Axton.*—For three causes; 1st. Because you were not ordained by the consent of the *eldership*.

*Bishop.*—But I had the hands of three or four bishops!

*Axton.*—But that is not the *eldership* *St. Paul* speaks of, 1 Tim. iv. 14.

*Bishop.*—By what *eldership* were you ordained? was it not by a bishop?

*Axton.*—I had, indeed, the laying on of the hands of one of the bishops of *England*, but that was the least part of my calling.

*Bishop.*—What calling had you more?

*Axton.*—I having *exercised* and expounded the *Word* several times in an ordinary assembly of ten ministers; they joined in prayer, and being required to speak their consciences in the presence of God, declared, upon the trial they had of me, that they were persuaded I might become a profitable labourer in the house of God; after which I received the laying on the hands of the bishop.

*Bishop.*—But you had not the laying on of the hands of those preachers.

*Axton.*—No; I had the substance, but I wanted the accident, wherein I beseech the Lord to be merciful to me; for the laying on of hands, as it is the *word*, so it is agreeable with the mighty action of ordaining the ministers of God.

*Bishop.*—Well, then, your ordination is imperfect, as well as mine. What is your second reason?

*Axton.*—Because you are not ordained bishop over any *one* flock; nay, you are not a pastor over any one congregation, contrary to 1 Pet. v. 2, *Feed the flock*; and to Acts xiv. 23, from whence it is manifest, that



there should be bishops and elders through every congregation.

*Bishop.*—What is a congregation ?

*Axton.*—Not a whole diocese, but such a number of people as ordinarily assemble in one place to hear the Word of God.

*Bishop.*—What, if you had a parish six or seven miles long, where many could not come to hear once in a quarter of a year ?

*Axton.*—I would not be a pastor over such a flock.

*Bishop.*—What is your third reason ?

*Axton.*—Because you are not chosen by the people, Acts xiv. 23, *And they ordained elders by election in every church, χειροτονήσαντες, by the lifting up of hands.*

*Bishop's Chancellor.*—How came you to be parson of *Morton Corbet* ?

*Axton.*—I am no *parson*.

*Chancellor.*—Are you, then, *vicar* ?

*Axton.*—No ; I am no vicar ; I abhor those names as anti-christian ; I am pastor of the congregation there.

*Chancellor.*—Are you neither *parson* nor *vicar* ? How hold you your living ?

*Axton.*—I receive these temporal things of the people, because I, being their pastor, do minister to them spiritual things.

*Chancellor.*—If you are neither *parson* nor *vicar*, you must reap no profit.

*Axton.*—Do you mean good faith in that you say ?

*Chancellor.*—Yea, if you will be neither *parson* nor *vicar*, there is good cause why another should.

*Bishop.*—You must understand, that all livings in

the church are given to ministers as *parsons* and *vicars*, and not as *pastors* and *ministers*. How were you chosen pastor?

*Axton*.—By the free election of the people, and leave of the patron. After I had preached about six weeks, by way of approbation, I was chosen by one consent of them all; a sermon being preached by one of my brethren, setting forth the mutual duties of pastor and people.

*Bishop*.—May the bishops of *England* ordain ministers?

*Axton*.—You ought not to do it in the manner ye do; that is, without the consent of the eldership, without sufficient proof of their qualifications, and without ordaining them to a particular congregation.

*Bishop*.—Well, *Mr. Axton*, you must yield somewhat to me, and I will yield somewhat to you. I will not trouble you for the *cross in baptism*, and if you will wear the *surplice* but sometimes, it shall suffice.

*Axton*.—I cannot consent to wear the surplice; it is against my conscience. I trust, by the help of God, I shall never put on that *sleeve* which is a mark of the beast.

*Bishop*.—Will you leave your flock for the surplice?

*Axton*.—Nay, will you persecute me from my flock for a surplice? I love my flock in Jesus Christ, and had rather have my right arm cut off than be removed from them.

*Bishop*.—Well, I will not deprive you this time.

*Axton*.—I beseech you consider what you do in removing me from my flock, seeing I am not come in

at the window, or by simony, but according to the institution of Jesus Christ."\*

It is apparent that the views of many parties in that day were verging very fast towards Independency. If we mistake not, there were only two, or at most, three points, on which the puritans needed further enlightenment, in order to their arriving at a truly scriptural position. The first of these related to the connexion between church and state; the second to the connexion between one church and another; and the third, to the teaching of the New Testament in respect to the order of officers in the church itself. The answers of Mr. Axton shew that whilst, in the main, his views respecting the independency of Christ's people and ministers were correct, he had not that settled conviction respecting some matters of detail, which a more advanced period would bring to light. But the way was evidently prepared. In due time the providence of God raised up instruments by whom the simplicity and suitableness of those principles which were involved in primitive apostolic institutions, should be rendered apparent.

\* Neal's Hist. of the Puritans, 1754, vol. i. p. 171—173.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE EARLY INDEPENDENTS; OR, THE BROWNISTS AND BARROWISTS.

THE first person associated with the revival of Independency in England, is one who for a long time gave his name to those who advocated it, and whose alleged character has been the source of many unjust reflections on the system itself. If Browne were in every respect the man he has been supposed to be, no just argument could be drawn from such a fact against the principles he espoused. It must be admitted, that the discovery and able enforcement of truth are not unfrequently associated with much imperfection in the character of the mere discoverer and advocate. There may be in some minds a tendency to disparage even a good cause when it is sustained by men of small reputation. But such a mode of reasoning will scarcely be admitted by those who know how to discriminate between things that differ. The truth of the gospel, as proclaimed by the apostles, was in no way affected by the traitorous conduct of Judas; neither would it have been so, if the entire body of the apostles had followed his example. In every age of the church there have been truthful advocates, who nevertheless were very inconsistent men. If, therefore, we were to regard the character of Browne wholly in the same light as his enemies, we should neverthe-

less be prepared to test his opinions by something better than such a standard; the more especially as they purported to be drawn from the Divine Word. We hesitate, however, to admit all that has been alleged against him, and certainly are inclined to make that abatement which is due to the fact, that whatever is discreditable in his history has been advanced by his avowed opponents. But let us turn to the life, remarkable and eventful as it was, of Robert Browne himself, in order to judge more accurately respecting this matter.

He was descended from an ancient and respectable family in Tolethorp, in Rutlandshire, and was related to the lord treasurer Burghley. His grandfather, Francis Browne, had been in high favour with Henry the Eighth, and for some particular service rendered to that monarch had a charter granted to him in the eighteenth year of his reign, confirmed by act of parliament, which gave him "leave to put on his cap in the presence of the king, or his heirs, or any lord spiritual or temporal in the land, and not to put it off, but for his own ease or pleasure." \* This circumstance may seem trivial, were it not that it throws light upon the family connexions and associations of Browne's ancestors. As Fuller informs us, it was "an ancient and worshipful family." Intimately connected with the court-party, we can imagine how everything at Tolethorpe would be so squared as to be acceptable with the reigning and ruling party of the day. And if,—as there is reason to believe,—Christopher Browne, the father, inherited the tastes, and was anxious to perpetuate the connexions of the

\* Fuller's Church Hist. book ix. cent. xvi. § 2.

grandfather ; it is easy to conceive how improbable it was that Robert Browne would meet with anything like fair and friendly treatment, in the event of his associating himself with a party obnoxious to dignitaries in the church, and those who were greatly swayed by their influence at court. This is a point which must not be overlooked in relation to Browne's after history. He was educated in Corpus Cristi, or Bene't College, Cambridge ; and, although Fuller questions whether he was " ever a graduate therein," there can be no doubt of his natural ability and proficiency, since he was master of the Free School, St. Olaves, Southwark ; chaplain to the Duke of Norfolk ; a popular speaker, and a nervous writer.

Little is known respecting his Cambridge life, excepting, that he became an acceptable preacher at Bene't church. The author from whom we have already quoted says, in reference to his preaching, that "the vehemence of his utterance passed for zeal among the common people ; and made the vulgar to admire, the wise to suspect him." He also adds, "Dr. Still, afterwards master of Trinity (out of curiosity, or casually present at his preaching), discovered in him something extraordinary, which he presaged would prove the disturbance of the church, if not seasonably prevented." \* Probably this "something extraordinary" was an after discovery of the venerable Dr. Still's, which would never have been made, but for the prominent and obnoxious part which Browne afterwards took in relation to the established religion of the day. Such reminiscences are not uncommon in connexion with parties against whom strong prejudices are enter-

\* Ibid.

tained. Fuller himself tells us that, when he was a mere youth, he had seen Browne, and, having conceived a natural horror of him, indulges himself in the following recollection:—"He was of an imperious nature; offended, if what he affirmed but in common discourse were not instantly received as an oracle. He was then so far from the sabbatarian strictness to which some preciser Brownists did afterwards pretend, that both in judgment and practice he seemed rather libertine therein."\* That is, he regarded Browne as a somewhat dogmatical old man, only rather free from the sanctimoniousness which he had expected to meet with in one whom he considered as an ultra puritan.

The public life of Browne, which commenced when he was somewhat young, introduced him to circumstances of a trying nature to one of his ardent temperament. The measures enacted by Queen Elizabeth for the enforcement of uniformity,† which were vigorously seconded by Archbishop Parker,‡ were anything but favourably received. Great numbers of ministers

\* Fuller's Church Hist. book ix. cent xvi. § 3—7.

† Elizabeth was proclaimed on the 17th of November, 1588. At first she acted with great caution in the ecclesiastical changes projected. Preaching, however, was prohibited the next month after her accession. In 1599 the Act establishing her ecclesiastical supremacy was passed, as well as the Act of Uniformity, which restored King Edward's service-book and first liturgy. From this time the heaviest fines and penalties were incurred by all who used any other mode of approaching God than that provided by the Book of Common Prayer. In the convocation of 1562—3 the thirty-nine articles were agreed upon. Elizabeth wrote to Parker in 1564—5, commanding him to enforce uniformity in concurrence with his brethren in the commission for that purpose, which was complied with most scrupulously.

‡ Parker had seceded from Rome, and retained the ferocity of an inquisitor.

were ejected from their livings on refusing to conform;\* and the consequence was, that the more consistent amongst the puritans were compelled to separate themselves from the established church. In 1556, in consequence of the numerous publications which issued from the press, and which made a powerful impression upon the public mind in favour of the persecuted party, the liberty of the press was restrained. Power was given to the wardens of the Stationers' Company to search all suspected places, and to open all packages; and all stationers, printers, and others, trading in books, were required to enter into recognizances truly to observe the decree of the Star Chamber to that effect.† Such violent measures separated the two parties yet more; and although the separatists were under the necessity of acting secretly, and were somewhat divided amongst themselves, yet they increased in strength. A re-action took place, the reverse of that which the public measures were intended to produce. Not only did Cartwright and others advocate the boldest measures of reform,‡ but in parliament itself the puritans were supported in such a manner as to show that a strong feeling was growing up against the hierarchy. From the debates

\* Great numbers of those who had been Catholics under Mary retained their livings and conformed. Only 192 of all orders chose to part with their preferments.—*Strype's Annals*, iii. i. 106.

† Parker, i. 442. Price's *Hist. of Nonconformity*, i. 195, 196.

‡ Thomas Cartwright was one of the first in England to reject the episcopal order and publicly espouse the presbyterian system. He was Lady Margaret's professor at Cambridge, and very popular in advocating anti-hierarchical principles. In 1570, while Browne was at Islington, he was deprived of his professorship by Whitgift, vice-chancellor of the University, for refusing to renounce his sentiments. The propositions which he presented to the vice-chan-



in the House, in April, 1571, it is evident that there was a great inclination not only to effect a reformation in ecclesiastical matters, but to restrain the power of the bishops and other functionaries of the church. "Mr. Strickland, a grave and ancient man," as we are informed, "spake at large of the abuses of the church of England and of the churchmen; as, first, that known papists are admitted to have ecclesiastical government and great livings; that godly, honest, and learned protestants have little or nothing; that boys are dispensed with to have spiritual promotions; that by friendship with the master of the faculties, either unable men are qualified, or some one man allowed to have too many several livings; finally, he concluded with petition, that, by authority of the House, some convenient number of them might be assigned to have conference with the lords of the spirituality, for consideration and reformation of the matters by him remembered." \* He afterwards brought in a bill, which was so far approved of as to be read for the first time. And then began that struggle between the commons and the court which, after many vicissitudes, reaching through the reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles, terminated in the complete overthrow and execution of the last. In the same year, we find Browne cited

cellor were greatly in advance; and probably Browne did not go so far as he did at this time. He reduced the officers of the church to bishops and deacons, and contended for each church to be governed by its own ministry and presbytery.—Price, i. 218. See Hanbury's edition of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, vol. i. for a brief but admirable sketch of the life of Cartwright; also, the recent "Memoir of the Life and Writings of Thomas Cartwright," by the Rev. B. Brook.

\* D'Ewes's Journal, p. 157.

to appear before Archbishop Parker,\* at Lambeth, as Neal has informed us in the following words.

“In the month of June, the archbishop cited the chief puritans about London to Lambeth; viz., *Mr. Goodman, Lever, Sampson, Walker, Wyburn, Goff, Percival, Deering, Field, Browne, Johnson*, and some others. These divines, being willing to live peaceably, offered to subscribe the articles of religion, as *far as concerned the doctrine and sacraments only*; and the book of *Common Prayer*, as far as it tended to edification; it being acknowledged on all hands that there were some imperfections in it; praying, with respect to the *apparel*, that neither party might condemn the other, but that those who wore it, and those who did not, might live in unity and concord. How reasonable soever this was, the archbishop told them peremptorily, that they must come up to the standard of the queen’s injunctions, or be deprived. *Goodman* was also required to renounce a book that he had wrote many years ago, when he was an exile, *against the government of women*; which he refused, and was therefore suspended. *Mr. Strype* says, that he was at length brought to a revocation of it, and signed a protestation before the commissioners at *Lambeth*, April 23, 1571, concerning his dutiful obedience to the queen’s majesty’s person, and her lawful government. *Lever* quietly resigned his prebend in the church of *Durham*. *Browne* being domestick chaplain to the Duke of *Norfolk*,† his patron undertook to screen him; but the archbishop sent him word, that no place within her majesty’s dominions

\* Hanbury has referred to this event, but mentions Whitgift instead of Parker. Whitgift was not archbishop until 1583.

† The Duke of Norfolk had been a pupil of Foxe, the martyr-ologist.

was exempt from the jurisdiction of the commissioners ; and, therefore, if his *grace* did not forthwith send up his chaplain, they should be forced to use other methods. This was that *Robert Browne* who afterwards gave name to that denomination of dissenters called *Brownists* ; but his family and relations covered him for the present." \* The terms in which he is spoken of, and the company in which he is found, sufficiently indicate the eminence of Browne at that early period of his life. But it is apparent that he was at this time a puritan, and nothing more. In the course of a few years, we find his name mentioned again, under peculiar circumstances.

In consequence of the impression produced on the public mind by the proceedings in parliament and elsewhere, an attempt was made by artifice to regain some measure of the public sympathy in favour of those who were in power. Speaking of Archbishop Parker, Neal observes, " His zeal against the puritans betrayed him sometimes into great inconveniences ; like a true *inquisitor*, he listened to every idle story of his scouts, and sent it presently to the queen or council ; and the older he grew, the more did his jealousies prevail." He then proceeds to narrate a story of a " sham plot which was fathered on the puritans," in the following words. " In the month of *June*, one of his servants acquainted him, that there was a design of the *puritans* against the life of the lord treasurer and his *own* ; and that the chief conspirator was one *Undertree*, encouraged by the great earl of *Leicester*. The old archbishop was almost frightened out of his wits at the news, as appears by the following passage in his

\* Neal's Hist. of the Puritans, 1754, vol. i. pp. 187, 188. We are not sure whether the Browne mentioned by this author as being " *deprived* " in 1573, is the same person.

letter to the treasurer. 'This horrible conspiracy,' (says he) 'has so astonished me, that my will and memory are quite gone; I would I were dead before I see with my corporeal eyes, that which is now brought to a full ripeness.' He then prays, that the detection of this conspiracy may be protected and honourably considered, and the conspirators punished with the utmost severity, otherwise the end would be worse than the beginning. And that he might not seem to express all this concern for his own safety, he tells the treasurer, that it was for *his* sake and the *queen's* that he was so jealous, 'for he feared, that when rogues attempted to destroy those that were so near her majesty's person, they would at last make the same attempt upon *her* too; and that even some that lay in her bosom [*Leicester*] when opportunity served, would sting her.' The archbishop sent out his scouts, to apprehend the conspirators that his *steward* had named, who pretended a secret correspondence with *Undertree*; and among others who were taken into custody, were the reverend *Mr. Bonham*, *Browne*, and *Stonden*, divines of great name among the puritans: *Stonden* had been one of the preachers to the queen's army, when the earl of *Warwick* was sent against the northern rebels. Many persons of honour were also accused, as the earls of *Bedford*, *Leicester*, and others. But when *Undertree* came to be examined before the council, the whole appeared to be a sham, between *Undertree* and the archbishop's *steward*, to disgrace the puritans, and punish them as enemies to the state, as well as the church. So early was the vile practice of fathering sham plots upon the *puritans* begun, which was repeated so often in the next age. *Undertree* had forged letters in the names of *Bonham*,

*Stonden*, and others ; as appeared to a demonstration when they were produced before the council, for they were all written with one hand. When he was examined about his accomplices, he would accuse nobody, but took the whole upon himself ; so that *their honours* wrote immediately to the archbishop, to discharge his *prisoners*. But, which is a little unaccountable, neither Undertree nor the archbishop's *steward* received any punishment. His grace's reputation suffered by this plot ; all impartial men cried out against him, for shutting up men of character and reputation in prison, upon such idle reports."\*

The Browne† referred to in this narrative, is, in all probability, the one with whom we are now concerned. He would at that time be in his twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth year, and was engaged as a lecturer at Islington. The circumstance related above, still points him out as a person distinguished for his advocacy of puritan principles ; and this second taste of the power of the bishops, and farther insight into the intrigues of the court, would naturally have great influence upon his mind. He was no ordinary character, neither did his enemies deem him so. Had such been the case, this first experience of trouble, in consequence of being allied with an obnoxious party, would have induced him to conform ; and, coming as he did from an ancient and courtly family, such conduct would have been the less remarkable. This, however, was by no means the case. So far from being cowed,

\* Neal, i. 223, 224.

† His name is variously spelt, with or without the final *e*. Fuller and Neal generally spell it *Brown* ; Hanbury, however, more correctly, *Browne*.

his spirit rose with the emergency. He persevered in his puritanical course; and was led to discern the scriptural defect not only of the established polity, but also of the puritan or presbyterian one.

We hear nothing of him, however, from this time till about the year 1580. If, as is probable, he spent the interval in the neighbourhood of London, he could not fail to be deeply interested in some of those scenes which were enacted in parliament, as well as in the discussion between Cartwright and Witgift, respecting the claims of episcopacy and presbytery. It was in 1575, that Peter Wentworth, speaking on behalf of the liberties of parliament, represented a conversation which took place between himself and Archbishop Parker. "I have heard," he says, "of old parliament men, that the banishment of the pope and popery, and the restoring of true religion, had their origin from this House, and not from the bishops; and I have heard that few laws for religion had their foundation from them; and I do surely think, before God I speak it, that the bishops were the cause of that doleful message,\* and I will shew you what moveth me so to think. I was amongst others, the last parliament sent unto the Bishop

\* In 1571—2, various bills were introduced of an ecclesiastical kind, amongst which was one to enforce the articles of religion agreed upon by the convocation of 1562. It was at this time that a message was brought from the queen that the house should not deal in any matters of religion without permission of the bishops. Hume says of the above speech, that it contains "a rude sketch of those principles of liberty which happily gained, afterwards, the ascendant in England;" and of Wentworth, that he was "the true forerunner of the Hampdens, the Pym, and the Hollises, who in the next age, with less courage, because with less danger, rendered their principles so triumphant."

of Canterbury, for the articles of religion that then passed this House. He asked us why we did put out of the book the articles for the homilies, consecrating of bishops, and such like? Surely, sir, said I, because we were so occupied in other matters, that we had no time to examine them, how they agreed with the Word of God. What, said he, surely you mistook the matter; you will refer yourselves wholly to us therein. No, by the faith I bear to God, said I, we will pass nothing before we know what it is; for that were but to make you popes. Make you popes who list, said I, for we will make you none. And sure, Mr. Speaker, the speech seemed to me to be a pope-like speech, and I fear lest our bishops do attribute this of the pope's canons unto themselves, *Papa non potest errare*;\* for surely if they did not, they would reform things amiss, and not to spurn against God's people for writing therein as they do; but I can tell them news, they do but kick against the pricks, for undoubtedly, they both have and do err, and God will reveal his truth, maugre the hearts of them, and all his enemies, for great is the truth and it will prevail."† Although there were few who had the courage of Wentworth, there were many in the house who sympathized with him, and multitudes besides out of doors, of which number Browne was one. Indeed it has been hinted that the course which Browne pursued, was the result of certain instigations which had a political rather than an ecclesiastical motive for their basis. "Resentment of oppression," says Hanbury, "might explain some of the motives which actuated him in part of his subsequent conduct; for, from what is now known

\* *The pope cannot err.*

† D'Ewes's Journal, 239.

of the real sentiments of several of Queen Elizabeth's 'most favoured ministers,' Browne might be the *unworthy* promoter of liberal views in mere contradiction to the arbitrary measures of the hierarchy." He also hints, that the lenity of the Lord Treasurer Burghley, to which reference will hereafter be made, was as much the result of his "tactics" as a statesman, as of his kindly feeling as a relative.\* He quotes, also, the following passage from Hume, as tending to substantiate his surmise, respecting the manœuvring in which Browne was made use of as a mere instrument for state purposes: "Ever since the first origin of that sect, through the whole reign of Elizabeth as well as of James, *puritanical* principles had been understood in a *double* sense, and expressed the opinions favourable both to a political and to ecclesiastical liberty. And as the court, in order to discredit all parliamentary opposition, affixed the denomination of puritans to its antagonists, the religious puritans willingly adopted this idea, which was so advantageous to them, and which confounded their cause with that of the patriots, or country party. Thus were the civil and ecclesiastical factions regularly formed."†

Admitting, as we do, all that Hume has advanced, and even more than has been hinted at respecting the policy of Queen Elizabeth's statesmen, whether of the court or of the church, we cannot but express our conviction that Browne is unfairly dealt with, by any such surmise respecting his motives as those to which we have alluded. The kind of inquiries he resolved; the nature of the principles he advocated; the dispo-

\* Hist. Memorials, vol. i. p. 18.

† Ibid. p. 24, note b.

‡ Ibid.



sition of the parties with whom he associated and who adopted his views ; the great influence which he possessed in spite of much opposition and the obloquy cast upon his name ; the sufferings he endured ; the complete absence of everything like proof, direct or indirect, that he was tampered with either by Burghley or any one else ; and the want of everything like recompense for services supposed to be performed in behalf of a wealthy as well as powerful party ;—all these are abundantly sufficient to refute the hypothesis. It is hardly probable that he would have become a tool for sinister purposes, and have looked for no emolument. A man of his disposition would never have been satisfied with that measure of reward which it is supposed he received for his services, and would certainly have come to it in a more easy and dexterous way. On the whole, we are inclined to believe that Browne was actuated by sincere motives in the greater, and more especially the earlier portion of his public life ; and that, in all probability, the statements relating to the close, have been exaggerated by his enemies.

But to proceed with our narrative. After some years, in which we hear nothing concerning him, we find him in the neighbourhood of Norwich, preaching with his accustomed ability, and acting as an avowed separatist from the church of England. Before this time, he had been frequently imprisoned ; but when and where, we are not informed. According to Fuller, he used to boast “that he had been committed to thirty-two prisons, and in some of them he could not see his hand at noonday.” Such a statement compels us to the conclusion above, since it is hardly possible for

\* Church Hist. of Britain, book ix. cent. xvi. sec. 2.

him to have been committed so often *after* this period. At Norwich, Browne associated himself, in the first instance, with a Dutch congregation,\* whom he indoctrinated with his views; and afterwards, with the assistance of a schoolmaster of the name of Harrison, became successful in gathering many congregations in the diocese of Norwich, and forming them into churches, according to his own interpretation of scriptural principles. The rapidity with which he disseminated his views is remarkable, and proves either that the minds of men were prepared to receive them, or that he had great powers of persuasion. He was not, however, long unmolested. The bishop of Norwich was at this time a Dr. Freke, a man whose spirit was altogether different from that of his predecessor, Dr. Parkhurst. In his first visitation he made "sad havoc among the puritan ministers," suspending and depriving a considerable number of the most faithful.† These circumstances, and the excitement which they produced, prepared the way, in all probability, for Browne's success. His turn, however, came at last. In 1581, he was committed to prison by the bishop, who gave the following account of him in a letter to Lord Burghley, dated Sudham, 19th April, 1581:—"Herewith I send unto your lordship other articles ministered against one Robert Browne, a minister, and his several answers thereunto: the said party being lately appre-

\* Fuller says of Norwich, that it had at this time "almost as many Dutch strangers as English natives inhabiting therein." He seems to be in error in making Browne visit Zealand before he went to Norwich; as well as in stating that he "went over to purchase himself more reputation from foreign parts." Indeed this author is full of inaccuracies.—Church Hist. book ix. cent. xvi. sec. 2.

† Neal, i. 233.

hended in this country, upon complaint made by many godly preachers, for delivering unto the people corrupt and contentious doctrine, contained and set down more at large in the same articles. His arrogant spirit of reproving being such as is to be marvelled at, the man being also to be feared, lest, if he were at liberty, he would seduce the vulgar sort of the people, who greatly depend on him, assembling themselves to the number of a hundred at a time, in private houses and conventicles, to hear him, not without danger to some thereabout. And so I humbly betake your Honour to God's tuition."\*

The bishop was not aware of the relation between his prisoner and Burghley; but soon became acquainted with it by the receipt of the following reply: — "After my very hearty commendations to your lordship: whereas, I understand that one Browne, a preacher, is by your lordship, and others of the ecclesiastical commission, committed to the custody of the sheriff of Norfolk, where he remains a prisoner, for some matters of offence, uttered by him by way of preaching; wherein I perceived, by sight of some letters written by certain godly preachers in your lordship's diocese, he hath been dealt with, and by them dissuaded from that course he hath taken. Forasmuch as he is my kinsman, if he be son to him whom I take him to be, and that his error seemeth to proceed of zeal rather than of malice, I do therefore wish he were charitably conferred with and reformed; which course I pray your lordship may be taken with him, either by your lordship, or such as your lordship shall assign for that purpose; and in case there shall not follow thereof such success as may be to your

\* *Lansdowne M.SS. No. 33; Hanbury, i. 19.*

liking, that then you would be content to permit him to repair hither to London, to be further dealt with as I shall take order for upon his coming; for which purpose I have written a letter to the sheriff, if your lordship shall like thereof. And so I bid your lordship, right heartily, farewell. From the court at Westminster, this 21st of April, 1581. Your lordship's very loving friend, William Burghley."\*

What now became of Browne does not appear. If he were sent to London, he must have been speedily released; for in the course of two or three months we find him "troubling" the bishop again, as appears from a second letter to Lord Burghley, dated the second of August, 1581. "May it please your lordship to understand that though Mr. Browne's late coming into my diocese and teaching strange and dangerous doctrine in all disordered manner, hath greatly troubled the whole country, and brought many to great disobedience of all laws and magistrates; yet by the good aid and help of my Lord Chief Justice, and Mr. Justice Anderson, his associate, the chiefest of such factions were so bridled, and the rest of their followers so greatly dismayed, as I verily hoped of much good and quietness to have thereof ensued, had not the said Browne now returned, contrary to my expectation, and greatly prejudiced these their good proceedings; who, having private meetings in such close and secret manner as that I know not possibly how to suppress the same. Am very sorry to foresee that, touching this my diocese, which must in short time, by him and other disordered persons,

\* Fuller's Church Hist. book ix. cent. xvi. sec. 2. Fuller spells the name *Burleigh*, as also do most historians.

which only seek the disturbance of the church, be brought to pass. And, therefore, the careful duty I ought to have to the country being my charge, enforceth me to crave most earnestly your lordship's help in suppressing him especially, that no further inconvenience follow by this his return : and procuring my Lord Chief Justice and Mr. Anderson such thanks from her Majesty for their painful travail in that behalf, that thereby they may be encouraged to go still forwards in the same ; and herewithal, if it would please your lordship to give me your good advice, how to prevent such dangers as through the strange dealings of some of the gentlemen in Suffolk about Bury, is like to ensue, I should be much bound to your honour for the same ; which gentlemen, in winking at, if not of policy procuring the disordered sort to go forwards in their evil attempts, and discouraging the staid and wiser sort of preachers . . . will in time, I fear me, hazard the overthrow of all religion, if it be not in due time wisely prevented." \*

In consequence of this fresh interference with his labours, he thought it prudent to leave the kingdom. Accompanied by Harrison and "about fifty or sixty persons," he embarked for Holland, and having obtained leave of the magistrates "to worship God in their own way," the entire company settled at Middleburgh in Zeeland. Here they formed themselves into a church according to the principles of their leader ; Browne being chosen as teacher, and Harrison as pastor.† The press being unrestrained, Browne published his sentiments in "A Book which sheweth the

\* Lansdowne M.S.S. Hanbury, i. 20.

† Stillingfleet's Unreasonableness of Separation ; or, An Impartial Account of the History, Nature, and Pleas of the present Sepa-

Life and Manners of all true Christians ; and how unlike they are to Turks and Papists, and Heathen Folk. Also, the Points and Parts of all Divinity, that is, of the revealed Will and Word of God, are declared by their several Definitions and Divisions." The leading features of Browne's system may be seen from the following extracts.

"*The church planted or gathered*, is a company or number of Christians or believers, which, by a willing covenant made with their God, are under the government of God and Christ, and keep his laws in one holy communion : because Christ hath redeemed them unto holiness and happiness for ever, from which they were fallen by the sin of Adam. *The church government*, is the lordship of Christ in the communion of his offices ; whereby his people *obey* to his will, and have mutual use of their graces and callings, to further their godliness and welfare.

"*The kingdom of Christ*, is his office of government, whereby he useth the obedience of his people to keep his laws and commandments, to their salvation and welfare. *The kingdom of Antichrist*, is his government confirmed by the civil magistrate, whereby he abuseth the obedience of the people to keep his evil laws, and customs, to their own damnation. . . . *Separation* of the open wilful, or grievous offenders, is a dutifulness of the church in withholding from them the Christian communion and fellowship, by pronouncing and showing the covenant of Christian communion to be broken by their grievous wickedness, and that with mourning, fasting, and prayer

ration from the Communion of the Church of England, &c. Second edition, 1681, p. 48.

for them, and denouncing God's judgment against them.

"*The office of teaching and guiding*, is a charge or message committed by God unto those who have grace and gifts for the same, and thereto are tried and duly received of the people, to use their obedience in learning and keeping the laws of God.

"*Eldership* is a joining or partaking of the authority of elders, or forwardest and wisest, in a peaceable meeting, for redressing and deciding of matters in particual churches, and for counsel therein.

"*A Pastor* is a person having office and message of God, for exhorting and moving especially, and guiding accordingly: for the which he is tried to be meet, and thereto is duly chosen, by the church which calleth him; or, received by obedience where he planteth the church.—*A Teacher* of doctrine is a person having office and message of God, for teaching especially, and guiding accordingly, with less gift to exhort and apply: for the which he is tried to be meet, and thereto is duly chosen, by the church which calleth him; or, received by obedience where he planteth the church.—*An Elder*, or more forward in gift, is a person having office and message of God, for oversight and counsel, and redressing things amiss: for the which he is tried, etc.

"*The Reliever* [or *Deacon*] is a person having office of God to provide, gather, and bestow the gifts and liberality of the church as there is need: to the which office he is tried and received as meet.—*The Widow* is a person having office of God to pray for the church, and to visit and minister to those which are afflicted and distressed in the church: for the which she is *tried and received* as meet.

“ *Civil Magistrates* are persons authorised of God, and received by the consent or choice of the people, whether officers or subjects, or by birth and succession also, to make and execute laws by public agreement; to rule the commonwealth in all outward justice; and to maintain the right, welfare, and honour thereof, with outward power, bodily punishments, and civil forcing of men.

“ *The gathering of voices and consent of the people*, is a general inquiry who is meet to be chosen; when, first, it is appointed to them all, being duly assembled, to look out such persons among them; and then, the number of the most which agree is taken by some of the wisest, with presenting and naming of the parties to be chosen, if none can allege any cause or default against them.—The *Ordaining* by some of the forwardest and wisest, is a pronouncing them with prayer and thanksgiving, and laying on of hands (if such imposition of hands be not turned into pomp or superstition), that they are called and authorised of God, and received of their charge to that calling.”

It appears from the above, that Browne held some of the principles of the presbyterian or puritan party in respect to intra-congregational arrangements.\* He divided the officers of the church into elders and deacons; but the elders he also divided into elders,

\* The distinction here made is of some importance. By intra congregational presbyterianism we mean a government of the congregational church by elders in addition to, but inclusive of, the pastor. This is quite compatible with congregational Independency, if the church has the ultimate authority. But extra-congregational presbyterianism, developed in sessions, synods, consistories, conferences, &c., having authority over ministers and churches, is subversive of congregational Independency. Browne did not favour the last kind of presbyterianism.



pastors, and teachers. To the deacon he also added the deaconess or widow. In every other respect his system was congregational. No synodical or sessional authority was admitted into it. The interference of the civil magistrate, even if it amounted only to a confirming the government of the church in religious matters, was denounced as the kingdom of antichrist. Discipline, or the separation of offenders by withholding from them Christian fellowship, was enforced as an important duty. The views of Browne, therefore, at this time, were essentially the same as those afterwards held by his successors; and being derived from scripture, were to be tested by that standard, and not by the character of the merely human interpreter.

How long Browne remained at Middleburgh, it is difficult to ascertain. According to some, he returned in 1589;\* according to others, in 1585;† but according to another authority, at a much earlier period. Stillingfleet would lead us to infer that Browne returned in 1582, the same year in which he settled there. Speaking of the church, he says, "they had not been there *three months*; but at the falling out between Browne and Harrison, Browne forsakes them, and returns for England."‡ In addition to this, he tells us that Browne subscribed, "promising to the archbishop to

\* Neal, i. 252.

† Price's Hist. of Nonconformity, i. 312. Hanbury, i. 23. Fuller's supposition we have already referred to.

‡ Stillingfleet's Unreasonableness of Separation, p. 48; in which the dean refers for his authority to Stephen Offwood's advertisement to John Delecluse and H. May, pp. 10, 39. Hanbury says, "whether his (Browne's) personal conduct were impeached we have not discovered." For an account of "the unreasonableness of separation," and the prolonged controversy of which it formed a

live obediently to his commands.”\* He also gives us the following information respecting the quarrel between Browne and Harrison, in the words of a letter, which, he says, Harrison wrote to a friend in London: “Indeed, the Lord hath made a breach between us for our sins, which hath made us unworthy to bear his great and worthy cause. Mr. Browne hath cast us off, and that with open, manifest, and notable treacheries; and if I should declare them, you could not believe me. Only this I testify unto you, that I am well able to prove, that Cain dealt not so ill with his brother Abel as he hath dealt with me.”† If this statement is to be relied on, it was at this time that Browne began to exhibit a character anything but favourable; and the circumstance of his leaving Middleburgh and the church formed under his care, gives an air of plausibility to the statement. At the same time, it is difficult to understand the terms of the statement itself. If Browne had been guilty of the conduct ascribed to him, Harrison would hardly have said, Mr. Browne has “cast us off.” As the pastor of the church,‡ it is

part, see Orme’s *Lives of Baxter and Owen*, more especially the latter, p. 319. Stillingfleet’s references to Browne and Harrison appear to have been overlooked.

\* Unreasonableness of Separation, p. 48.

† Ibid.

‡ Fuller sneers at Harrison as “a petty pedagogue.” This, however, is Fuller’s spite. Cartwright wrote a reply to one of his publications, entitled, “An Answer unto a Letter of Master Harrison’s,” in which he addresses Harrison in terms of high esteem, in consequence of his personal knowledge of him at Middleburgh. He says, “I shall willingly hearken unto any, much more unto you, upon whom the Lord in mercy hath bestowed good graces.” Brook’s *Life of Cartwright*, p. 304, 306. See also, Stillingfleet, as above, p. 30. Browne replied to this “answer.”

more likely that he would have carried out that discipline which the system required. As to Browne's "subscribing," it is difficult to deny what Stillingfleet has advanced, and yet the time does not appear to tally with what is recorded by other parties.

In 1584 we find him in Scotland, accompanied by several others. In consequence of his pursuing his former line of conduct in respect to the establishment in that country, he was regarded as a "malcontent;" committed to prison for a day or two; and brought up for trial. He met however with favour from the court, and according to some was not only protected, but encouraged.\* This year in Scotland was one of considerable excitement. In February, Melville, the successor of Knox,† had been summoned before the privy council, to answer for certain treasonable speeches alleged to have been delivered in a sermon of his, and fearing the consequences, had fled to Berwick. Those acts of parliament also, known amongst the people as "the black acts,"—which ordained that no ecclesiastical assembly should be held without the king's consent, that a refusal to follow the counsel of the king and privy council should be punished as treason, and that all ministers were to acknowledge the ecclesiastical superiority of the bishops, — were passed about the same time. What precise part Browne took, we are not informed. "It may be inferred," says Hanbury, "that he was acting covertly, in subserviency to the courtiers against the dominant divines."‡ The facts of the case, however, scarcely warrant such an inference. King James, in his

\* M'Crie's *Life of Melville*, vol. i. p. 325.

† Knox died, Nov. 24, 1572.

‡ Hanbury, i. 22.

reference to the matter, classes Browne with Penry, who was not suspected of such subserviency, and distinctly speaks of both as coming into Scotland to sow "their *popple* amongst us." The principles of Browne which led him to oppose an established presbyterianism, quite as much as an established episcopalianism, sufficiently account for the exasperation of the ministers, who aimed to have their system of church government exclusively established, so as to be in perfect independence of the state. At the same time the court party, acting from motives of policy merely, would be inclined to favour Browne, because his arguments would tell somewhat against the exclusive pretensions of the presbyterians. It can hardly be supposed that Browne was willingly used as a mere tool for the accomplishment of their purposes; since the principles he espoused,—King James himself being witness,—were as much opposed to the aims of the one party as the other. Yet further; Lord Burghley, writes to the archbishop of Canterbury on the 17th of July, of this same year, in the following terms: "I am content that your grace and my lord of London, where I fear Browne is, should use him as your wisdoms think meet. I have cause to pity the poor man."† From this it appears that Browne was obnoxious to both parties, and given up even by his relative, as an incorrigible man, who opposed the established religion of both countries; and who having escaped by means of court influence from the hands of the presbyterians in the one, had fallen into the hands of the episcopalians in the other.

\* Basil. Dor. p. 143.

† Hanbury, i. 22.

Accordingly, he was cited to appear before the archbishop of Canterbury, soon after, to answer for some one of his publications: which, we are not informed. The following letter, addressed to Christopher Browne,\* the father, shows that his relative once more interfered in his behalf, and secured his liberty on certain conditions.

“After my very hearty commendations; understanding that your son, Robert Browne, had been sent for up by my lord bishop of Canterbury, to answer to such matters as he was to be charged withal, contained in a book made by him, and published in print as it was thought by his means; I thought good, considering he was your son and of my blood, to send unto my lord of Canterbury in his behalf, that he might find what reasonable favour he could show him; before whom I perceive he hath answered in some good sort; and although I think he will not deny the making of the book, yet by no means will he confess to be acquainted with the publishing or printing of it. He hath besides yielded unto his lordship such further contentment, as he is contented (the rather at my motion) to discharge him; and, therefore, for that he purposeth to repair to you, I have thought good to accompany him with these my letters, and to pray you, for this cause or any of his former dealings, not to withdraw from him your fatherly love and affection, not doubting but with time he will be fully recovered, and withdraw from the relics of some fond opinions of his; which will be the better done, if he be dealt withal in some kind and temperate manner. And so I bid you very heartily fare-

‡ Anthony Browne, according to Hanbury.

well. From my house near the Savoy, this 8th of October, 1584. Your loving friend and cousin, William Burghley."\*

Browne now repaired to his father's house, where all the influence which a father could exert, was employed in conjunction with that of such divines as were thought most able to confer with him, in order to change his views and induce him to conform. But at present all was in vain; and "the old gentleman," who "would own him for his son no longer than his son owned the church for his mother,"† was anxious to have him removed from Tolethorpe. The following letter, not only implies as much as this, but seems to speak of Browne's condition as any thing but that of a person at large. Probably he was regarded, even under his father's roof, as a kind of ecclesiastical prisoner on his parole, through the kindly intervention of the lord treasurer.

"After my very hearty commendations; I perceive by your letters, that you have little or no hopes of your son's conformity, as you had when you received him into your house; and, therefore, you seem desirous that you might have liberty to remove him further off from you, as either to Stamford or some other place, which I know no cause but you may very well and lawfully do, where I wish he might better be persuaded to conform himself, for his own good, and yours and his friend's comfort. And so I very heartily bid you farewell. From the court, this 17th of February, 1585. Your very loving friend and cousin, William Burghley."‡

\* Fuller's Church Hist. book ix. cent. xvi. § 2.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

the means of bringing so many over to just and scriptural principles, should be the first to step aside from the true path of honour. At the same time it should be borne in mind, that Browne was eccentric in all his movements; that the personal influence brought to bear upon him was very great; that we have had no explanation of the motives by which he was actuated; that even to the last his sentiments remained unchanged; and that even whilst he had the living of Achurch, he never officiated personally, and may probably have looked upon the emoluments arising from it, in the light of a mere pension, on condition that he should be quiet. While it is admitted that no high-minded man would have acted as he did, his fault was rather negative than positive. He is not chargeable with the conduct of many in his day, of opposing principles which he formerly espoused; much less of persecuting his former friends, in order to vindicate his change of sentiments. Whatever may have reached us respecting the subsequent character of Browne, is scarcely to be relied on, in consequence of the source from which it comes; and the circumstances connected with his death, as related by Fuller, are, in the highest degree, improbable.\*

We have thought it proper to refer thus at length to the character and history of Robert Browne, on account of the prominent place he has always held in connexion with the revival of religion in England. Admitting, as we do, the inconsistency of his conduct in the latter period of

\* Fuller's Church Hist. book ix. cent. xvi. § 3—7. Pagitt's Heresiography, p. 17. The former has acquired the title of "honest;" but there is little of this quality where his prejudices are concerned.

his life, we are, nevertheless, convinced that more has been made of it than the recorded facts of the case warrant. Had he gone directly over to the church party, sought promotion, obtained a bishopric, and followed in the steps of a Parker and a Whitgift, or even of a Jewel and a Grindal, he could not have been more maligned than he has been. Nay more, we venture to add that old father Fox, Cartwright, and Baxter, made concessions as inconsistent with their avowed principles, as did Robert Browne. Opposed, as he was, by all parties, whether episcopalian, presbyterian, or his own; having suffered so much, already, for giving utterance to his sentiments; urged to keep silence not only by his family connexions, but by the chief minister of state; it is not to be wondered at, although it is deeply to be regretted, that the infirmity of human nature should triumph over his better principles. We are, also, almost constrained to conclude that he held some views respecting the lawfulness of avoiding persecution, which some of his followers also entertained, and which were not widely different from those of the conforming puritans of the day. Mr. Finch, referring to the Brownists, in his speech in parliament in 1592, on occasion of the passing of the bill enacted against them, intimated, in the plainest terms, that it was no principle of theirs, to refuse to go to church, or to speak against the government established. "There be great faults," he says, "in the preamble and the body of this bill. It pretendeth a punishment only to Brownists and sectarians; but throughout the whole bill, not one thing that concerneth a Brownist; and if we make a law against Barrowists and Brownists, let us set down a note of them, who they are. But this bill is, 'not to



come to church,' or to 'speak against the government established;' this is not the opinion of the Brownists."\*

From this language it appears, that although the principles of the Brownists denied a scriptural church constitution to the establishment, and disallowed the rightful calling of the clergy, they did not forbid those who held them from occasionally going to church to hear what might be said by the mere preacher, as was the case with Robinson at a later period. The puritans, on the other hand, while admitting the church of England to be a true church, would not attend its ministrations on account of their differing from it in matters of ceremonial and discipline. Hence, while the Brownists charged the puritans with inconsistency in not attending a church admitted to be a true church; the puritans charged the Brownists, or some of them, with inconsistency and dissembling in attending the ministrations of a church which they denied to have a scriptural constitution. Which of the two parties was most in the right it is not difficult to determine, since a mere attendance on ministrations, whether for the purpose of hearing what may be advanced, or upon compulsion of law, does not necessarily imply assent to what is done, or a dereliction of principle.† But to refuse to attend on ministrations appointed by a church acknowledged to be scriptural, partakes somewhat of a schismatical character. Browne, in particular, seems to have been actuated by this line of policy; and hence many of the aspersions, some of them probably unfounded, that were cast upon him. Speaking of the Brownists, a puritan opponent observes:—"Of my adversaries, I rather know

\* D'Ewes's Journal, p. 517.

† The case of Naaman is somewhat of this nature. 2 Kings, v. 18.

their nature than their number. Although sundry among them, from time to time, have laboured to be leaders, so upon the spur of emulation have galloped as hard as they could; yet without all question, there is none among them that can justly take the garland from Robert Browne. His writings do forejudge the cause against all his competitors. . . . Let them not disdain, therefore, that he should bear the name as the father of that family and brood, which, of late years, in a quarrel for the discipline, have made that rend in the assemblies of England. . . . Barrow and Greenwood nakedly discovered their profession, and are prisoners. Browne cunningly counterfeiteth conformity, and dissembleth with his own soul, for liberty." \* In addition to these, the following statement, although evidently not free from malice, confirms the view we have taken. "Although he promised to frequent our churches, and to come to prayers and sacraments, yet, living schoolmaster at St. Olave's, in Southwark for two years, in all that time he never did it; and when he was like to have been questioned for it, he withdrew into another parish. Sometimes he would go to hear sermons, but that he accounted *no act of communion*; and declared to his friends, that he thought it *not unlawful to hear our sermons*; and, therefore, persuaded his followers in London so to do. Notwithstanding this, he preached in private meetings, and that in the time of public assemblies, when he thought fit; which this author, though a nonconformist and friend of T. C's., † calls a cursed conventicle." ‡

\* S. Bredwell, quoted in Hanbury, vol. i. p. 23.

† Thomas Cartwright.

‡ Stillingfleet's *Unreasonableness of Separation*, p. 48. His

From this it is apparent that the conduct of Browne was such as could not be easily understood even by his friends, and was, therefore, the more likely to be misinterpreted or misrepresented by other parties. The principles, however, which he espoused did not depend upon him for their truth, and consequently were cherished by great numbers of the people. Instead of dying out of the minds of men, they revived with increasing power, and spread with great rapidity during the reign of Elizabeth.

We have already adverted to the statement of Sir Walter Raleigh respecting the number of the Brownists in his day.\* Opposition, instead of repressing the spirit of the party, only confirmed it. The false exposition frequently given of their sentiments, and the scandal to which they were subjected, made them the more cautious, in each successive period, in verifying them from the Word of God, and when needful in correcting them. Exposed to a cross fire—from the episcopalians on the one hand and the puritans on the other—they stood in need of great firmness; and, on the whole, acquitted themselves with remarkable moderation and courage. Not even the most abusive slanders, nor the fiercest persecution, could drive them from their purpose.

We have already mentioned Harrison, respecting whom little more is known than what has been stated. He appears to have been a man of excellent character, and was much esteemed even by his opponents. It is gratifying to know that he died at Middleburgh,

authority, given on the margin, is a "Defence of the Admonition to the followers of Brown, pp. 133—140."

\* See back, pp. 82, 83.

steadfast to the last. Other parties, however, deserve to be mentioned in connection with this early period, whose writings and sufferings constitute a noble testimony to the principles of Independency. We refer especially to Barrowe, Greenwood, and others.

Henry Barrowe was "a gentleman of a good house," according to the testimony of his contemporary, Lord Bacon.\* He was the son of a gentleman in Norfolk, and received his education in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he took his degree of B.A. in 1569. He became a member of the society of Gray's Inn, and was for some time a frequenter of the court. It appears that in his youth he led a somewhat dissipated life; but being brought under the influence of Divine truth, became a changed character, and advocated with great power the principles of Independency. Lord Bacon, after stating that he had "lived in London at ordinaries," and had "there learned to argue in table talk, and so was very much known in the city and abroad," adds that "he made a leap from a vain and libertine youth, to a preciseness in the highest degree, the strangeness of which alteration made him very much spoken of."†

Barrowe's most important writings‡ are those in which he defended his principles, and the conduct of his party, against the attacks of a puritan, but con-

\* Lord Bacon's works, Child's edition, vol. i. p. 383. He calls the Brownists "a third kind of *gospellers*;" and speaks of them as being "directed by the great fervour of the unholy Ghost."

† Ibid.

‡ Besides the works which are afterwards mentioned in the text, Barrowe wrote "A Brief Discovery of the False Church," &c.; for an account of which see Hanbury.

formist minister, of the name of Giffard.\* This person misinterpreting the views of the Barrowists or Brownists, (for the Independents of that age were known by both names,) endeavoured to hold them up to public obloquy, as followers of the Donatists of ancient times. Such conduct, on the part of one who conformed to a church which he did not approve of, was any thing but honourable; but, probably, his object was to curry favour with those in power, and to shield himself as a puritan from some measure of that suspicion under which he laboured. Such policy has often been followed by parties connected with a church from which they have dissented, but whose power they have feared. The conduct of Giffard was all the more ungenerous at this time, inasmuch as Barrowe was a prisoner, together with Greenwood, of whom we shall say more hereafter. In Barrowe's reply to Giffard, entitled "A plain refutation of Mr. Giffard's book, etc.," the following passage, from the dedication to Lord Burghley, gives us an insight into the actual condition of these early witnesses for the truth. "Hitherto, right honourable, have our malignant adversaries had their full scope against us, with the law in their own hands; and have made no spare or conscience to accuse, blaspheme, condemn, and punish us; yea, to pronounce and punish us as 'damnable heretics, schismatics, sectaries, seditious, disobedient to princes, deniers and abridgers of their sacred power, etc.,' to the ears and eyes of all men, openly in their pulpits, and in their printed books, published by the

\* Stillingfleet describes George Giffard, or Gifford, as "a nonconformist, at Maldon, in Essex," and speaks of him not only as "joined with Cartwright and other nonconformists," but as "named in one of the *classes* in Essex at that time."

consent and approbation of their church. No trial, all this while, upon any suit or complaint granted us; either civil, that we might know for what cause and by what law we thus suffer,—which yet is not denied the most horrible malefactors and offenders; or ecclesiastical, by the Word of God,—where place of freedom might be given us to declare and plead our own cause in sobriety and order; that so the means appointed of God for our recovery might be used, and we, wherein we should be found to err or transgress, might be convinced to our faces by the Scriptures, and left inexcusable!

“But, instead of this Christian course, they have shut us up, now more than three years, in miserable and close prisons, from the air; from all means so much as to write,—ink and paper being taken and kept from us; and a diligent watch both by our keepers held over us, and also continual searches, upon one pretence or other, made,—where we were rifled, from time to time, of all our papers and writings they could find. And being thus strictly kept and watched from speaking or writing—their conscience yet giving them no rest in all their prosperity and pleasures whilst we, the Lord's poor witnesses against their sins, breathed;—not to speak of their secret and indirect means, whereby they sought to take away our lives;—they suborned, amongst sundry others, two special instruments, Mr. Some, and Mr. Giffard, to abuse and blaspheme us publicly to the view of the world; each of them in two books: the one, labouring to prove us ‘anabaptists;’ the other ‘donatists.’ Wherefore, we addressed ourselves, by such means as the Lord administered, and as the incommodities of the place and infirmities of our decayed

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impropriety of private persons trying to reform the church, he says, "The faithful are commanded to gather together in Christ's name, with promise of direction, and protection, and with authority not only to establish his laws and ordinances amongst them, but faithfully to govern his church thereby. For the kingdom of God consisteth not in word, but in power. Now, this assembly of the faithful, before they be planted and established in this order, consisteth hitherto but of particular *private* persons; none, as yet, being called to office or function. Therefore, we may well conclude that God commandeth his faithful servants, being as yet private men, together to build his church, according to the pattern of Christ's Testament; without altering, changing, innovating, etc. And for this, we have the example of the primitive churches for our patterns and warrants, which sued not to courts and parliaments, nor waited upon princes' pleasures, when the stones were in a readiness, but presently having received the faith of Christ, received, likewise, the ordinances of Christ, and continued in the same. If they should tarry princes' leisure, where were the persecutions you speak of? Princes never punish them that obey their behests." \*

In another part, after referring to the offices of the ministers of the church of England, and classifying them under three heads, he states under the second his views respecting collegiate institutions, and proves himself a worthy advocate of a learned ministry and learning in general. "Yet would I not," he says, "that any one should deem, or suppose, that we condemn any lawful arts, or necessary sciences; or any

\* Plain Refutation, p. 5; Hanbury, i. 54.



holy exercises, or schools of institution; and so do labour to bring in barbarism, as Mr. Giffard, Mr. Some, and others have given out. No, we are so far from it, as we blame these universities, colleges, and schools, for their heathen, profane, superstitious, unchristian societies, disorders, customs, ceremonies; for their vain, curious, and unlawful arts and studies; and their manner of teaching them, etc. We desire with our whole hearts, that the tongues, and other godly arts, were taught not in the universities, or a *few places only*; but in all places where an established\* church is; at the least in every city of the land! Yet this indeed we hold, that every Christian man ought to have his abiding and dwelling, and to bring up his children, in such places where a Christian congregation is; and, that all schools of learning ought to be kept in such places where both teachers and scholars may be under the holy government and censures of Christ in his church; and may live and be kept in holy order. Then, that the arts and sciences which are thus taught or studied, be not vain, curious, or unlawful; but necessary and godly. Thirdly, that they be not taught, exercised, or practised, after any profane, vain-glorious, or superstitious manner; but in all sobriety, modesty, and in the fear of God. To these few rules, if their universities, colleges, schools, were reformed, then should they not be, as they now are, the seminaries of antichrist; the bane of the church; the corruption of all youth in the land: but then, should they be, that which they now pretend, the schools of all godly learning, to garnish

\* He does not refer to a church politically established; the word is used in its ordinary, not conventional sense.

the church: to furnish the commonwealth with fit and virtuous men for every place, office, and estate." \*

The following passage contains a development of his views respecting a scriptural call to the ministry, and the right method of ordination; from which it is apparent, that whilst asserting the congregational Independency of each particular church, he advocated union between the churches in matters of common interest. "Every particular congregation being a faithful flock, destitute of some minister,—for example, of a pastor,—ought to make choice of some one faithful Christian of whose virtues, knowledge, judgment, fitness, and conversation, according to the rules in that behalf prescribed, they have assured proof and experience, in some Christian congregation or other where he hath lived. Such a one, the whole congregation being gathered together in the name of God, with fasting and prayer for the especial assistance of his Holy Spirit, to be directed to that person whom the Lord hath made meet, and appointed unto them for that high character and ministry. In which election, every particular member of the said congregation hath his peculiar interest of assent or dissent; showing his reasons of dissent in reverent manner, not disturbing the holy and peaceable order of the church: whose exceptions and reasons are to be considered of and compared to the rules of the Word, if they be found peremptory and true; as, the party to be of no sound judgment in the faith; of no sufficient knowledge in the Scriptures; a drunkard, a smiter, covetous; one that ruleth not well his own house, wife, children, etc.;—then yieldeth the whole church to their reasons, or rather, to the Word of God. But

\* Plain Refutation, p. 124.

if their exceptions be insufficient, or untrue, then proceedeth and standeth their election; and the persons that take them are publicly reprov'd, according to their offence.

“ This choice, thus made, accepted, and determin'd, the Elect is to be publicly ordained, and received in and of the same Congregation whereof and whereunto he is chosen: if there be an eldership in that congregation, by them, as the most meet instruments, with fasting, prayer, exhortation, etc; if not, then by the help of the elders of some other faithful congregation; one church being to help and assist another in these matters. But, if the defection and apostacy be so general, as there be not any where any true elders to be found, or conveniently to be had, yet then hath the church that hath power and commandment to choose and use ministers,—yea, that *only* hath that most high and great spiritual power of our Lord Jesus Christ, upon earth, committed unto their hands,—power also to ordain their ministers by the most fit members and means they have. For the eldership doth not add more power, but more help and service to the church in this action. Neither doth this action,—which is but a publishing of that formal contract and agreement betwixt the whole church and these elect; the church giving, and the elect receiving these offices, as by the commandment of God, with mutual covenant and vow, each to other, in all duties,—belong to the elders only, as separate from the church, to do it for and in the church; but to the elders, as the most fit members and instruments of the church. Otherwise, when the true ministry ceased, as in the general apostacy, they could never again be recovered in the church; because

they cannot have this ordination of true elders, and so must the ministry, sacraments, and ordinances of Christ's Testament cease for ever, and the true established church never be seen again upon earth; unless, with the papists, they will make a personal succession of ministers in some place, ever since the apostle's time; or with Mr. Giffard, make a true, public ministry, sacraments, etc., in the church of Rome, in the deepest apostacy! Which yet, of all other, is the most absurd proposition that ever was uttered by any man, or published and allowed by any church; contrary to all the rules of God's Word; and even to itself; for, how, can there be, by any reasonable man, imagined, or seen, public apostacy and public faith in the same estate, at one and the same instant? But now, if they hold the church of Rome the true church, and her elders true ministers of Christ; then, it is utterly unlawful (for them) to withdraw, depart, or separate from the 'true church' at any time; and, then, were all these and all they, in a most deadly schism. Mr. Calvin's distinction, that he separated from the 'corruptions' of the church of Rome, and not from 'the church' of Rome, will not here stand; for thereby they confess the church of Rome the 'true church,' and that they for the 'corruptions' of the church depart; which 'corruptions' if they be not such, and so incurable, as to make the church of Rome no church; then is it not lawful, for any such 'corruptions,' to depart from and to forsake the 'true church;' and then are they still in schism, by their own doctrine, and so no true ministers!"\*

\* Plain Refutation, p. 129.

The work from which these extracts are made, was followed by three others, occasioned by Giffard's replies. In the first of these, he notices the opinions of the church party respecting the perpetual obligation to follow the institutions of the apostolic and primitive churches. One party, he says, gave out, "That the form of ecclesiastical government, prescribed in Christ's Testament, practised by the apostles and primitive churches in the times of persecution, is not now necessary or tolerable under a Christian prince;" the other party, "that those ordinances, and that government, which they acknowledge Christ to have instituted and prescribed to his church, unto the world's end, may not now, under a Christian prince, be put in practice by the church, if he fostered the same, as they might, ought, and were, under heathen princes, by the faithful in all ages." He then opposes both of these positions. By the former, he says, "the prelates defend their outrageous government, and all their anti-christian proceedings." By the other, "the time servers and counterfeit reformists colour and defend their perfidy, not practising the gospel of Christ." Both parties, he adds, "most impiously abrogate the heavenly government and ordinances of Christ in his church; and abuse that most blessed and comfortable ordinance,—the Christian magistracy. Both of them shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; neither entering themselves, nor suffering such as would."

In the second of these publications entitled "A few Observations to the readers of Mr. Giffard's Last Reply," he informs the reader that both he and Greenwood had been "four years and three months, without trial, or relaxation, kept by the prelates in most

miserable and strait imprisonment," up to the time of his writing; and with scarcely "any means to defend or answer," for themselves. Such, however, was the season in which Mr. Giffard thought it his duty to attack them;—their books intercepted, their persons imprisoned, and every impediment purposely placed in their way to prevent them from expressing their thoughts in writing. Their spirit, however, rose with the emergency, and proved fully equal to their trying position.

John Greenwood, the friend of Barrowe, had also been educated at Cambridge, though at a later period than the latter, having taken his bachelor's degree in 1580. He was for some time chaplain to Lord Rich, and afterwards doctor or teacher of a church which maintained a precarious existence in and about London. Of the same church, Francis Johnson was pastor, Mr. Bowman and Mr. Lee deacons, and Mr. Studley and Kinaston elders.\* Greenwood was imprisoned some time before Barrowe, or in November, 1586. On being cited before the commissioners, who sat at the Bishop of London's palace, called London House, Aldersgate Street, he was interrogated respecting his office and opinions. When asked if he were a minister, and who had degraded him, he replied, "I was one according to your *orders*; and I degraded myself through God's mercy, by repentance." The examination proceeded further:—

"What say you of the church of England; is it a true established church of God?"

"The whole commonwealth is not a church."

"Do you know any true established church in the land?"

\* Masters, pp. 227, 228. Neal, vol. i. p. 363. Hanbury, i. 62, 63.

"If I did, I would not accuse it unto you."

"Is not the whole land, as now *ordered*, a true church?"

"No!"

In the course of the same examination, he stated his conviction that every congregation of Christ ought to be governed by that presbytery which Christ appointed: namely, pastor, teacher, and elder; that though the prince forbade them to correct the vices of men by the censures of the Word, they must nevertheless do what God commands; and that the order, government, and laws of the church, as then established, could not be approved of.

Greenwood, also, answered Giffard's publications, during the time of his imprisonment in the Fleet. He and Barrowe were companions not only in tribulation, but in the maintenance and defence of scriptural principles. There is great ability in Greenwood's writings, combined with some learning and scholarship. He writes with great severity against the conforming puritans of the day; not without reason, considering his provocations. Had he lived at a later period, he would probably have expressed himself in terms less harsh; but, then, at a later period, he would not have met with such treatment. On all essential points he and Barrowe were one, and there is no need, therefore, to refer any further to his writings.\* But we must proceed to a statement of the sufferings of these noble-minded men; and in order that the reader may have a proper conception

\* His principal writings were an "Answer to George Giffard's pretended Defence of Read Prayers and Devised Liturgies, &c. 1590;" and "A Brief Refutation of Mr. Giffard's supposed Consimilitude betwixt the Donatists and us, &c. 1591."

of their position, we shall take a brief review of the ecclesiastical condition of the country at this period.

Ever since the rise of the Brownists, in 1581, the most arbitrary measures were employed by the bishops of the church to suppress them. The ferocity of Archbishop Parker, although capable of being contrasted with the more moderate and compassionate demeanour of Grindal, was even exceeded by that of Whitgift. Both Parker and Whitgift were conformists to the church of England, after having been papists in the time of Queen Mary ; and the sanguinary lessons which they derived from the church in which they had received their ecclesiastical education, were unhappily enforced by the sanction, and often carried out into practice by the commands of Queen Elizabeth. Many of the puritans and nonconformists were great sufferers ; but the Brownists and Barrowists were, on the whole, the most severely dealt with. This is strikingly confirmed by the fact, that even those parties who petitioned for mercy themselves, had no mercy upon the Brownists. The magistrates of Suffolk, in their address to the lords in council, in 1583, while complaining that they were called puritans, and remonstrating in behalf of their puritan ministers, as "painful ministers of the Word," who were "marshalled with the worst malefactors, presented, indicted, arraigned, and condemned, for matters of very slender moment ;" could nevertheless unblushingly say, "we allow not of papists, of the family of love, of anabaptists, or Brownists. No ; we abhor all these, we punish all these." \* While such a remonstrance as this had the effect, for a season, which it was intended to have, in staying

\*. Strype's Annals, iii. i. 264. .



proceedings against the conforming puritans; the Brownists derived no benefit from it, but, on the contrary, were treated with greater severity than before. Elias Thacker and John Copping were both executed at Bury St. Edmunds; the former on the fourth, and the latter on the sixth of June, 1583.\* The indictment against them was for spreading certain books against the Common Prayer, which had been written by Robert Browne; which, it was asserted, undermined the constitution of the church, by acknowledging her Majesty's supremacy *in civil causes only*. Mr. Copping, who suffered a long and illegal imprisonment, was charged with having aggravated his crime by not allowing his child to be baptized. Not that he was opposed to baptism, but being unable to get any preacher to baptize without godfathers and godmothers, which in his conscience he could not permit, he was reduced to the necessity of having the rite neglected. Such a charge, brought against him while he was under confinement and separated from his own family, was a most gratuitous piece of vindictiveness. Such, however, was the temper of the bishops of that day.

In the same year, the Court of High Commission,† which Hume has denounced as "a real inquisition, attended with similar iniquities and cruelties," was established by the procurement of Archbishop Whitgift. The object of this court was to secure the con-

\* Neal, vol. i. p. 260.

† The Court of the Star-chamber had been in existence long before (Hallam's Constitutional Hist. i. 65); but was superseded by this, until Cawdrey appealed from the latter to the Court of Exchequer in 1591. 5 Coke's Reports. Heylin's Hist. of the Presbyterians, viii. 21.

demnation of unlawful books, by the examination of authors, printers, and publishers; the sequestration of the property of those who came under ecclesiastical censure; and the enforcement of the ecclesiastical law in all its parts, by various civil penalties. The constitution of the court, as indicated by the letters patent, dated December 9, 1583, was as follows. There were forty-four commissioners; of whom twelve were bishops, some privy councillors, and the rest clergymen or civilians. The court, composed of these, was empowered to put into execution the acts of supremacy, uniformity, etc. Three parties might form a quorum, with certain restrictions, for the purposes mentioned above; and the tyranny of the triumvirate was thus imposed upon the nation. No sooner was this court established, than Whitgift sought to render it efficient. This man was thorough in all that he did; especially if souls were to be snared, or persons of real piety to be punished. He seemed to take a malicious delight in bending the laws over to the side of persecution, and where no law existed which could be thus used, he either made, or sought to procure one. He was probably more feared and detested than any man of his day. The puritans, and others, were treated by him "as Turks or dogs," rather than "as men, or ministers of Jesus Christ;"\* and the opinion formed of him by the puritans, was justly merited. No bishop was deemed "so tyrannical as he; no, not Bonner." His throne was "the chair of pestilence;" his mouth "full of cursing against God and his saints;" "his feet swift to shed blood;" while "one had as lieve see a serpent, as meet him." This man pushed

\* See Wigginton's Testimony in Brook's Puritans, vol. i. p. 420.

on his inquisitorial measures with almost inconceivable harshness; and but for the interposition of Lord Burghley, who was of a different disposition, and whose mere statesmanship had in it more of "the quality of mercy," than all the Christianity of the bishops put together; there is no knowing how much wretchedness would have speedily resulted from his instrumentality. As it was, the country at large heaved with the throes of a natural resentment against this ecclesiastical despot, which found vent for itself in several ways. The lords of the council and the parliament sympathised, in some measure, with the people, and restrained for a season, if they did not altogether prevent, the excess of tyranny. But for the queen, a more lenient treatment would have been the result. But she loved power quite as much as any of her creatures; and added the caprice of wantonness to the obduracy of the tyrant. Instead of acting a womanly part, she even instigated her minions in their ferocious proceedings, while they ever acted as if they knew that they could not go too far in fulfilling her royal pleasure. Indeed, it requires all the splendour of her reign in other respects, to disperse the thick cloud of infamy which rests upon it, in respect to these matters. We are compelled to pass over many acts which bore hard upon the puritans, in order to notice those proceedings which had a special reference to the Independents. It is somewhat singular, that while a strong puritan feeling was gaining ground in parliament, and evincing itself, by various attempts to reform the church of England according to puritan notions, that the Brownists should have few, or no sympathisers in the House ready to defend their cause. The very same parliament of 1593, which sought to

check the unconstitutional proceedings of the Court of High Commission, passed an iniquitous statute against the Brownists. A bill was adopted, entitled "an Act to retain the queen majesty's subjects in their due obedience," which enacted, that "if any person, above the age of sixteen years, shall obstinately refuse to repair to some church, chapel, or place of common prayer, to hear Divine service; or shall forbear to do the same, for the space of a month, without lawful cause; or shall at any time, after forty days from the end of this session, by printing, writing, or express words, purposely practise, or go about to move or persuade any of her majesty's subjects, or any others, within her highness's dominions, to deny, withstand, or impugn her majesty's power and authority, in causes ecclesiastical; or to that end shall advisedly or maliciously move, or persuade any other person whatsoever, from coming to church, to hear Divine service or to receive the communion according to her majesty's laws; . . . that then, every such person so offending, and thereof lawfully convicted, shall be committed to prison, there to remain, without bail or mainprize, till they shall conform; and yield themselves to some church, chapel, or usual place of common prayer, and hear Divine service, and make such open submission and declaration of their conformity, as by this act is afterwards appointed." \* The form of submission enjoined, was the following: "I do humbly confess and acknowledge, that I have grievously offended God, in condemning her majesty's godly and lawful government and authority, by absenting myself from church, and from hearing Divine service, contrary to the godly

\* Collier, ii. 636, 637, 638, 639.

laws and statutes of this realm: and in using and frequenting disordered and unlawful conventicles and assemblies, under pretence and color of exercise of religion. And I am heartily sorry for the same, and do acknowledge and testify in my conscience, that no other person hath, or ought to have, any power or authority over her majesty; and I do promise and protest, without any dissimulation, or any color or means of dispensation, that from henceforth I will from time to time obey and perform her majesty's laws and statutes, in repairing to the church, and hearing Divine service, and do my uttermost endeavour to maintain and defend the same." \* The penalty for refusing to make this submission, was perpetual banishment; and such as remained beyond the time specified for leaving the country, and such as returned without license from the queen, were to suffer death as felons. Such sanguinary enactments as these require no comment. That they should be passed through both houses of parliament at such a period, serves to modify any complacent thoughts which an Englishman may be prone to indulge, respecting the glory of his country in an Elizabethan era. Whenever the list of great names, in whatever department of learning, science, or achievement, falls under the eye of any man whose philanthropy is not behind his patriotism, he will not be slow to remember that the men who bore those names were the leading spirits of our country, at a time when "mischief and murder" were "framed by a law."

It was in such a period as this that Independency revived in England, and under the operation of such

\* Ibid. Price's Hist. of Nonconformity, vol. i. 406.

enactments as the above, Barrowe and Greenwood became martyrs. For some time, however, before this, the spirit of this law had been acted upon. The congregation to which we referred a few pages back, and with which Greenwood was associated, had not been unnoticed by the keen-eyed agents of the bishops. Compelled to secrecy in all their proceedings, for some years they had managed to elude the vigilance of their foes. In a country nominally Christian, they were as in a heathen land, where the profession of faith in Christ was an obnoxious and forbidden thing. The primitive Christians conducted their worship in the catacombs, and amongst the tombs. These devoted men had no such places of resort. But every sabbath in summer they sought some secluded rural spot in the outskirts of the metropolis; and there they held their protracted meeting, for prayer and exposition of the Word, from the dawn till the close of the day. The vicinity of London was favourable for such purposes; and many a retired scene in the neighbourhood of Stepney, or Islington, or in the west end, now overbuilt with stately streets and princely residences, might easily be found, where no eye could witness their proceedings but that of "Him who seeth in secret." Who does not love to follow, in imagination, these English confessors and martyrs, as they wend their way, in small groups of two and three, to the appointed place of meeting, passing by cathedral, church, and chapel, that they may have fellowship in the truth, according to their own convictions, and directed by God's Word alone! There when the little band has met, thanksgivings are offered for continued deliverance from the power of the oppressor, and prayer ascends to heaven for persevering faith and

the grace that leads to godliness, and not one of all the company is forgotten, in the communion of heart with heart. John Greenwood opens the book, and expounds some suitable portion of the Word of life, and Francis Johnson exhorts and directs the flock; Mr. Studley and Mr. Kinaston report such cases as need to be attended to; and Mr. Bowman and Mr. Lee receive the contributions of those present to defray the charge of their simple "diet," and distribute to the necessity of the brotherhood. Neither are such of their fellowship forgotten as are in prison, having been apprehended on charge of forsaking the church by law established. They have fellowship with them also in their sufferings, and send them a portion, at least, of their "collection," as a token of their regard. All is simplicity here. Is baptism to be administered? The pastor pours the water from his hand on the face, pronouncing the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Is the Lord's Supper to be administered? A few "white loaves" and wine are procured. The pastor gives thanks; and breaks the bread, and distributes it thus broken to the deacons, and the deacons to the rest, no other form being used than the words recorded by the apostle, "Take, eat; this is my body broken for you; this do in remembrance of me." In a similar manner "the cup" is passed round, and the words of the original institution indicate its use: "This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." They then sing a hymn, and make a collection for the poor. Is any individual to be joined to their society? All that they require him to promise, is that he will "walk with them so long as they walk in the way of the

Lord, and as far as may be warranted by the Word of God." In so simple a manner were their proceedings conducted. In winter, when out-of-door meetings were impracticable, they met at private houses; but the method of their procedure was essentially the same as we have described it. \*

This primitive society of believers was never free from the apprehension of molestation; and from time to time individuals associated with them were apprehended and committed to prison. At last the entire congregation was surprised by the bishop's officers, one Sunday, at Islington, in the place where the protestant congregation had been apprehended some years before in the reign of Mary. About fifty-six were apprehended and imprisoned in the jails about London. Before this, Barrowe, Greenwood, Johnson, Settle, and Studly, had been captured; and this hunted and persecuted people scarcely knew where to look for relief or protection. In their examination they confessed fearlessly to all that they had done, and vindicated themselves from many false charges in the presence of the bishops. It was plain that no just accusation could be brought against them, beyond that of separating themselves from the establishment in order to worship God according to the convictions of their own consciences and the directions of the New Testament. They were neither seditious nor tumultuous; but as loyal and honest a body of men as could be found anywhere in her majesty's dominions. But the bishops were not to be moved. They, therefore, made an appeal to the lords of the council, stating their whole case. This appeal is worthy of being placed on record, as an im-

\* Neal, i. 363, 364.



portant document in connexion with the early history of Independency ; affording, as it does, a clear insight into their principles, and into the persecuting character of the protestant establishment of that day. " We find," they say, " the English hierarchy to be dissonant from Christ's institution, and to be derived from antichrist, being the same the pope left in this land, to which we dare not subject ourselves. We further find, that God has commanded all that believe the gospel to walk in that holy faith and order which he has appointed in his church ; wherefore in the reverent fear of his name we have joined ourselves together, and subjected our souls and bodies to *those* laws and ordinances ; and have chosen to ourselves such a ministry of pastor, teacher, elders, and deacons, as Christ has given to his church on earth to the world's end, hoping for the promised assistance of his grace in our attendance upon him ; notwithstanding any prohibition of men, or what by men can be done unto us. We are ready to prove our church order to be warranted by the Word of God, allowable by her majesty's laws, and no ways prejudicial to her sovereign power ; and to disprove the public hierarchy, worship, and government, by such evidence of Scripture, as our adversaries shall not be able to withstand ; protesting if we fail herein, not only willingly to sustain such deserved punishment as shall be inflicted upon us, but to become conformable for the future, if we overthrow not our adversaries, we will not say, if our adversaries overcome us."

This was a bold challenge, and by no means likely to be accepted. It indicates, however, the strong convictions and transparent motives of these perse-

cuted separatists. If they err in any respect, it is in placing themselves in a position of being called upon to afford proof of the scriptural character of their religious faith and worship. Whether they were right or wrong, was no concern of any merely earthly government, so long as they conducted themselves as loyal and peaceable subjects of the realm. But to proceed with their address in relation to their sufferings:—"The prelates of this land," they say, "have for a long time dealt most injuriously, unlawfully, and outrageously with us, by the great power and high authority they have gotten into their hands, and usurped above all the public courts, judges, laws, and charters of this land, persecuting, imprisoning, and detaining at their pleasures, our poor bodies, without any trial, release, or bail; and hitherto without any cause either for error or crime directly objected. And some of us they have now more than five years in prison; yea, four of these, five years in close prison with miserable usage, as Henry Barrowe and John Greenwood now in the Fleet; others they have cast into their limbo of Newgate, laden with as many irons as they could bear; others into dangerous and loathsome jails, among the most facinorous and vile persons, where it is lamentable to relate how many of these innocents have perished within these five years; and of these, some aged widows, aged men, and young maidens, etc.; where so many as the infection hath spared lie in woful distress, like to follow their fellows if speedy redress be not had. Others of us have been grievously beaten with cudgells in Bridewell, and cast into a place called Little Ease there, for refusing to come to their chapel service; in which prison several have ended their lives; but upon none of our compa-

up in close confinement, and died, as Neal informs us, "like rotten sheep," some of starvation, some of infectious distempers, and some of the jail fever. One of those who thus died in prison, at this period, was Roger Rippon, upon whose coffin his fellow prisoners placed the following inscription:—

"This is the corpse of Roger Rippon, a servant of Christ, and her majesty's faithful subject; who is the last of sixteen or seventeen, which that great enemy of God, the archbishop of Canterbury, with his high commissioners have murdered in Newgate within these five years, manifestly for the testimony of Jesus Christ; his soul is now with the Lord, and his blood crieth for speedy vengeance against that great enemy of the saints, and against Mr. Richard Young, who in this and many the like points, hath abused his power for the upholding of the Romish antichrist, prelacy, and priesthood. He died A. D. 1592."

This inscription was copied out and circulated amongst the Brownists and their friends, and created a strong feeling in their favour. Many, however, were apprehended on suspicion or confession of their having been parties to the distribution of that which was so offensive to the hierarchy, and committed to prison.

A further, and last attempt was made to procure redress, in the following petition to Lord Burghley, entitled, "The humble Petition of many poor Christians, imprisoned by the Bishops in sundry Prisons in and about London, etc.—We humbly beseech your honour, either to grant us a speedy trial together, or some free Christian conference, or else in the mean while, that we may be bailed according to law; or else put into *Bridewell*, or some other convenient place, where we may be together for our mutual help

and comfort; or if your *honour* will not yourself alone grant this our request, that then it may please you to be a mean for our speedy relief, unto the rest of her majesty's most honourable privy council.

"The Almighty God, that hath preserved your lordship unto these honourable years in so high service to our sovereign prince, and to the unspeakable comfort of this whole land, give your honourable heart so tender, compassion, and careful consideration in equity, of the poor afflicted servants of Christ, and that (before the Lord plead against this land for *Abel's* innocent blood that is shed in the several prisons) your honour may open your mouth for the dumb in the cause of the children of (devoted to) destruction, (that) you may open your mouth and judge righteously, and judge the cause of the afflicted; as the people of *Israel* when they went to war, first made peace with God, and removed all occasion whereby his wrath might be incensed, lest he should fight against them in battle. For if this suppression of the truth and oppression of Christ in his members, contrary to all law and justice, be without restraint prosecuted by the enemy in the land; then not only the persecuted shall daily cry from under the altar for redress, but God's wrath be so kindled for the shedding of innocent blood of men, even the blood of his own servants, (of whom he has said, *touch not mine anointed*) that if *Noah, Daniel, and Job*, should pray for this people, yet should they not deliver them.

"Pleaseth it then your lordship to understand, that we, her majesty's loyal, dutiful, and true-hearted subjects, to the number of three score persons and upwards, have contrary to all law and equity, been im-

prisoned, separated from our trades, wives, children, and families, yea, shut up close prisoners from all comfort, many of us the space of *two years and a half*, upon the bishop's sole commandment, in great penury and noisomeness of the prisons; many ending their lives never called to trial; some in hunger and famine; all of us debarred from any lawful audience before our honourable governors and magistrates, and from all benefit and help of the laws; daily defamed and falsely accused by published pamphlets, by private suggestions, often preaching, slanders, and accusations of heresy, sedition, schism, and what not. And above all, which most utterly toucheth our salvation, they keep us from all spiritual comfort and edifying by doctrine, prayer, or mutual conference, etc.

“And seeing that for our conscience only we are deprived of all comfort; we most humbly beseech your good lordship; that some free and Christian conference publicly or privately, before your honour, or before whom it would please you, where our adversaries may not be our judges (might be had); that our case with the reason and proof on both sides, might be recorded by indifferent notaries, and faithful witnesses; and if any thing be found in us worthy of death or bonds, let us be made an example to all posterity; if not, we entreat for some compassion to be shewn in equity, according to law for our relief; that in the meantime, we may be bailed to do her majesty service, walk in our callings, to provide things needful for ourselves, our poor wives, disconsolate children and families lying upon us, or else that we might be prisoners together in Bridewell, or any other convenient place at your honour's appointment,

where we might provide such relief by our diligence and labours, as might preserve life, to the comfort both of our souls and bodies.”\*

This petition was signed by fifty-nine prisoners, distributed as follows:—ten in the Gate-house, five in the Fleet, three in Newgate, eighteen in Bridewell, ten in the Clink, five in the White Lion, three in the Wood-street Compter, and five in the Poultry Compter. In addition to these, were the names of ten who had died in prison, two of whom were widows.

One would have supposed that such a petition as this, so worded, and so signed, would have procured some small amount of pity and show of justice. Such, however, was not the case. It was rejected by both bishops and privy council, for the following reasons:—“1. Because a disputation had been denied to papists. 2. To call the ministry of the church of England in question, is to call all other churches into question, against whom their exceptions entered. 3. The church of England has submitted to disputation three times in King Edward’s, Queen Mary’s, and Queen Elizabeth’s time. 4. These men’s errors have been condemned by the writings of learned men. 5. It is not reasonable that a religion established by parliament, should be examined by an inferior authority. 6. It is not reasonable to condemn those foreign churches that have acknowledged *ours* for a true church. 7. Their principal errors have been confuted by St. Austin. 8. This will strengthen the hands of the papists. 9. It has been the manner of heretics to require disputation with clamour and im-

\* Strype’s Annals, iv. 90. Neal, vol. i. pp. 367—390.

portunity. 10. The cause has been already decided by written books which they may consult. 11. They will not stand to the judgment of the civil magistrate. 12. If the church should satisfy every sect that riseth, there would be no end of disputation.”\*

Upon such reasons as these, were these conscientious men abandoned to all the severities of prison discipline. Some few, but a very few, may have been set free; the greater number were either banished the realm or executed. Amongst the latter were Barrowe and Greenwood. After undergoing various examinations, in all of which they were faithful to their own sentiments, they were indicted on the twenty-first of March, 1592-3, together with three others, at the Old Bailey. The indictment was “for writing and publishing sundry seditious books and pamphlets tending to the slander of the queen and government.” It was true that they had written only against the church as by law established, and in justification of their own conduct as individuals who could not conscientiously conform. The aim, however, of the archbishop was to cast upon them the odium of disloyalty and sedition, and thereby to shelter himself from the charge of being a religious persecutor. Throughout the trial they behaved with great firmness and consistency, asking for no favour, and seeking no mercy. They persisted in declaring their inviolable loyalty to the queen, and obedience to her government; insisting that they neither wrote nor intended any thing against her highness, but only against the bishops and the established hierarchy. Such a plea, however, was vain; they were all brought

\* Neal, i. 370, 371. Hanbury, i. 86—90.

in *guilty*. One of the five, Saxio Bellot, who is described as "a gentleman," betrayed his weakness at this crisis, and desired a conference. He then confessed his repentance for what he had done, with many tears, and was pardoned. Two others, Daniel Studley, a girdler, and Robert Bowlle, a fishmonger, remained firm; but were reprieved and sent back to prison. Barrowe and Greenwood were selected as examples by which to terrify the whole party, and had sentence of death passed upon them on the twenty-third of March. They were then commanded to prepare for immediate execution. The next day they were brought out of prison, their irons were struck off, and they were about to be bound to a cart which was to convey them to Tyburn, when a reprieve arrived, obviously for the purpose of allowing them an opportunity to recant. "They sent unto us," says Barrowe, "certain doctors and deans to exhort and confer with us. We showed how they had neglected the time; we had been well nigh six years in their prisons; never refused, but always humbly desired of them Christian conferences for the peaceable discussing and deciding our differences, but could never obtain it at their hands. Neither did these men all this time come unto us, or desire any such matter; that our time was now short in this world, neither were we to bestow it unto controversies, so much as unto more profitable and comfortable considerations. Yet if they desired to have any conference with us, they were to get our lives respited thereunto. Then if they would join unto us two other of our brethren in their prisons, whom we named unto them, we then gladly would condescend to any Christian and orderly con-



ference by the Scriptures, with such or so many of them as should be thought meet."\*

Such is Barrowe's own account of this transaction. The circumstance of his writing such a statement, in prison, and in the immediate prospect of death, is as noble a vindication of character as is to be met with on the page of history.†

The respite, however, was of short duration. Early on the last day of March, they were conveyed to Tyburn, and exposed under the gallows, with the fatal rope round their necks. It was thought that by this near approach to the terrors of death they would be unmanned, and moved to recant. Their persecutors, however, knew not the spirit of those with whom they had to deal. In their address to the people,—for they were "permitted to speak a few words,"—they protested their loyalty and innocence; "craving pardon of all men whom they had any way offended, and freely forgiving the whole world;" and praying "for her majesty, the magistrates, people, and even for their adversaries." They had scarcely "finished their last words," when a reprieve again arrived!

Such was the manner in which these persecutors sported with their victims in the presence of death. This second reprieve afforded an opportunity of eliciting the feeling of the people; for we are told that it was not only thankfully received by the prisoners, but

\* An Apologie or Defence, &c. p. 92. Strype's Whitgift, ii. 187.

† This quotation and the next following are from a letter written "in the time between his condemnation and execution" to "an honourable lady and countess, of his kindred." The entire document is contained in Henry Ainsworth's "Apologie or Defence of such true Christians as are commonly, but unjustly called Brownists." Hanbury, i. p. 48, 49.

"with exceeding rejoicing and applause of all the people, both at the place of execution, and in the ways, streets, and houses, as they returned."

Probably they had now some hope that their lives would be spared. Barrowe, therefore, wrote to his kins-woman, the "honourable lady and countess," the letter from which we have been quoting, in which he urges upon her the duty of "speaking to her majesty on their behalf." Whether or no this request was complied with, we are not informed. If so, it was of no avail. On the sixth of April, they were again taken to the place of execution, and there put to death.

Such was the end of these noble minded men.\* Barrowe was "one of the most remarkable men that ever engaged in religious controversy in the worst of times," and Greenwood was a kindred spirit. Both may have expressed themselves, at times, in terms of too great severity against their adversaries; and their animosity to the establishment may have been wanting in that discrimination which is so essential to the charitable management of religious controversy. But, considering the provocation they sustained, the cruelties to which they were exposed, the necessity which they felt to be laid upon them—in order to their persistence in the true faith—of being steadfast and unmoveable, and wholly of a resolute spirit; considering the times in which they lived, and placing ourselves as much as possible in the position which they occupied in that day; who can accuse them of any

\* The statement of Cotton, referred to by various parties, respecting Barrowe's last words, is quite unworthy of being recorded. If true, we require Barrowe's own interpretation of his meaning. Hanbury, i. 62. Unreasonableness of Separation, p. 51.

departure from the spirit and requirements of that gospel which they so heartily received.

The treatment which they experienced, terminated by their execution, was not altogether without effect upon the mind of the queen. Dr. Raynolds who had attended upon them in their last days, was asked by her majesty, "what he thought of those two men, Henry Barrowe and John Greenwood?" Raynolds was unwilling to express his opinion, and replied that it "could not avail anything to show his judgment concerning them, seeing they were put to death." Her majesty, however, was not thus to be put off, and insisted upon his expressing his opinion faithfully. "Whereupon he answered, that he was persuaded, if they had lived, they would have been two as worthy instruments for the church of God, as God had raised up in that age." On this her majesty sighed, but said no more. She evidently felt, however; and alluded to the subject afterwards in conversation with the Earl of Cumberland, in such a manner as to show that this matter engaged her thoughts, and to some extent troubled her.

Before we conclude this chapter, it is desirable to notice the extent to which the principles of Independency were revived by those parties whose names have occupied our pages. The history of individuals and of parties is of importance mainly in relation to the question which respects the return to scriptural principles and institutions.

On reviewing the conduct and opinions of the Brownists and Barrowists, we find that they were essentially Independents, although without the name. They were so, inasmuch as they advocated a return to the apostolic institution in relation to the organi-

zation of the Christian church. They espoused the cause of religious liberty no less by suffering for it than by their avowed opinions. But, in this respect, and up to this point, they were joined by many others. The peculiar feature of that system which they espoused is to be found in the self-government which it conferred upon every local or congregational church. Here their principles and practice were unique. While the establishment ordered every thing in relation to worship and fellowship through the authority of the crown and the bishops, with only a show of clerical representation, and without regard to the sentiments of the laity; and while the presbyterians sought to govern the church by a kind of representative synodical authority; these men adhered to the primitive practice of the Christian church, by disallowing all authority excepting that of the congregation of believing men over themselves, according to the directions of the New Testament. Each church was according to their system complete in itself, for all the purposes of self-management and discipline. In some respects, perhaps, the early Brownists pushed this principle too far; by not allowing the chosen ministers of one church to officiate in any other. This exclusiveness, however, was the result of an extreme view, which Barrowe and his followers learned to correct.\*

Both Brownists and Barrowists regarded the officers of the church in an erroneous light, dividing their functions into a number of classes not warranted by the faithful interpretation of the New Testament. It will have been perceived by the reader

\* See back, p. 137.

that, instead of bishops and deacons, they had four classes of officers, namely, a pastor, a teacher, deacons, and elders. This multiplication of officers arose from an incorrect view of the various names used in the New Testament to describe one and the same office.\* Still, these officers, however numerous, were congregational only, and the absence of synodical arrangements rendered the scheme though imperfect comparatively harmless.

In one respect these parties fell short of the truth, and became somewhat inconsistent; probably without knowing it. "We acknowledge," said Barrowe and Greenwood, "that the prince ought to *compel* all their subjects to the hearing of God's Word, in the public exercises of the church."† It is somewhat singular that such a sentiment as this should not have been felt to be at variance with what is so well expressed by the same parties, and in the same breath, "Yet cannot the prince *compel* any to be a member of the church, or the church to receive any without assurance by public profession of their own faith; or retain any, longer than they continue and walk orderly in the faith."‡ To us it seems inconsistent that the prince should be allowed, or rather obliged, to compel attendance, where it is admitted that he has no power over faith or discipline. Both Barrowists and Brownists, however, held this opinion; and hence the appeal of their leaders in prison to the government of the day, to allow them to expound and defend their principles by the Scriptures.§ The prin-

\* See vol. i. pp. 46—55 of the present work.

† Plain Refutation, &c. by Barrowe and Greenwood, p. 4.

‡ Ibid.

§ See also what has been advanced respecting Browne, p. 127.

ciples of civil and religious liberty had not then been investigated and acknowledged as in later times. What they did know, however, of the true principles of freedom was of a vital nature, and in the course of time attracted to itself other portions of truth not fully understood in their day.

## CHAPTER IV.

### JOHN PENRY, AND THE WELSH INDEPENDENTS.

CONTEMPORANEOUS with the revival of Independency in England, or nearly so, was its revival in the principality of Wales. Before this period that country had been much neglected. Formality and superstition abounded every where, and the grossest disorder prevailed. The subject of this chapter was the first to preach the gospel there publicly, as he himself informs us ; and although young, and not long favoured with the opportunity of evangelizing his own country, there is reason to believe that he effected much good, and prepared the way for other labourers in after years. It is evident from his publications and other writings, that if one thing lay more near to his heart than another, it was to lead his much neglected countrymen into the way of truth.

Apart, however, from these circumstances, there is something deeply interesting in the history of this man. His genius, his eloquence, his zeal, his fortitude, his untimely fate, are all points of great attraction.

John Penry, or Ap Henry,\* was a native of Brecknock, "born and bred," as he informs us, "in the

\* Sometimes written *a' Penry*.

mountains of Wales."\* He also speaks of himself as "a poor young man." This, however, must be understood comparatively; since he was educated first at Cambridge, and afterwards at St. Alban's Hall, Oxford, where he took his degree of M. A. in 1586. He was esteemed a young man of great promise, and "well acquainted," says Neal, "with arts and languages."† Even Wood, who heartily hated all puritans and Brownists, is compelled to admit that he was "a tolerable scholar and edifying preacher, and a good man."‡ Having entered into "holy orders," he became a popular preacher in both universities, and passing into Wales publicly preached the gospel to his countrymen. We have not ascertained what parts of Wales he visited, or what measure of success attended his labours. He saw enough, however, to feel for the spiritual destitution of the country, and never ceased to desire and pray that it might be removed. "I am the first," he writes in a letter we shall have occasion to refer to again, "since the last springing of the gospel in this latter age, that publicly laboured to have the blessed seed thereof sown in those barren mountains. I have often rejoiced before my God, as he knoweth, that I had the favour to be born and live under her majesty, for the promoting this work. In the earnest desire I had to see the gospel planted in my native country, and the contrary corruptions removed, I might well, as I confess in my published writings, with Hegetorides the Thracian,

\* Address to Lord Burghley, in Strype's Whitgift, book iv. p. 176. Hanbury, i. pp. 71, 72. He was born either in 1559 or 1560.

† Neal, i. 374.

‡ Athen. Oxon. vol. i. col. 592. Hanbury, i. 72.



forget mine own danger ; but my loyalty to my prince did I never forget. And being now to end my days, before I am come to the one half of my years, in the likely course of nature, I leave the success of my labours unto such of my countrymen as the Lord is to raise after me, for the accomplishing of that work which, in the calling of my country unto the knowledge of Christ's blessed gospel, I began." It is probable that some success attended his ministrations, since he refers to the "brethren in the west," in one of his latest writings; intreating the congregation in London to write to them in order "to comfort them." \*

What Welshman—what Welsh Christian is there that will not cherish the memory of this "first" preacher of the gospel in that now highly favoured country, where so many have since "entered into his labours," and where multitudes possessing both the principles and spirit of Penry, are seeking to do what it was in his heart to accomplish!

Penry had not been long engaged in these evangelizing efforts, when he was cited to appear before the high commission to answer for some opinions he had broached respecting the homilies and the "reading ministers." This was in 1587, at the time when the nation at large were in arms, anticipating with dread the Spanish invasion. The fears of all parties were awakened; but more especially of the puritans and Independents, who, notwithstanding what they had suffered from the protestant establishment, were the most zealous in their opposition to everything approximating to popery. While Queen Elizabeth, her

\* Address to the Congregation, &c. Hanbury, i.

statesmen, and her church, dreaded the threatened approach of Philip on political grounds chiefly, these parties were also moved by deep religious apprehensions. In these circumstances it was felt by many to be a grievous thing that the most zealous preachers were suspended from their functions, when their services were most needed to arouse the people at large to a just sense of their danger; and many attempts were made, by petitions to the queen and others, to bring about a change for the better. While an association was formed in Scotland, the avowed object of which was to offer assistance to the queen against the Spaniards; the brethren in London sought to obtain the liberty of their preachers, "that the people," as they themselves stated, "might be better instructed in the duties of obedience to their civil governors, and not be left a prey to priests and jesuits, who were no better than traitors to her majesty and the kingdom." \* Not only was there a great scarcity of preachers; but the greater number of the beneficed clergy were "illiterate men, brought up to trades and not to learning, and others of no very good character in life." † So strong was the feeling in this respect that many of the suspended preachers disregarded the injunction laid upon them by the bishops, and "hearkened unto God rather than men." The Essex ministers, in particular, in their petition to parliament on the 8th of March of this year, openly avowed

\* Petition to the Queen, MS. p. 838. Neal, i. 327.

† "New Survey of the Ministry of London," presented to the lord-mayor and aldermen. It appears by this survey that there were at this time only nineteen resident preachers in all London; while the "dumb or unpreaching ministers" were seventeen.—Neal, *ibid.*

their determination thus to act. "Such," they said, "is the cry of the people to us day and night for the bread of life, that our bowels yearn within us; and remembering the solemn denunciation of the apostle, *Woe be to us if we preach not the gospel*, we begin to think it our duty to preach to our people as we have opportunity, notwithstanding our *suspension*, and to commit our lives and whole estates to Almighty God, as to a faithful Creator; and under God to the gracious clemency of the queen, and of this honourable house." \*

Instead of complying with the demand of the times, and the reasonable desires of the puritans and others, the bishops sought to restrain the zealous efforts of such as sought to discharge their duty. The following "commission" was sent to all the ministers and churchwardens of London.

"Whereas sundry preachers have lately come into the City of London, and suburbs of the same; some of them not being ministers, others such as have no sufficient warrant for their calling, and others such as have been detected in other countries, and have, notwithstanding, in the City taken upon them to preach publicly, to the infamy of their calling; others have in their preaching rather stirred up the people to *innovation*, than sought the peace of the church. These are, therefore, in her majesty's name, by virtue of her high commission for causes ecclesiastical, to us and others directed, straightly, to enjoin, command, and charge all parsons, vicars, curates, and churchwardens, of all churches in the City of London, and the suburbs thereof, as well in places exempt as not

\* Neal, i. 328.

exempt, that they nor any of them do suffer any to preach in their churches, or to read any lectures, they not being in their own cures; but only such whose licenses they shall first have seen and read, and whom they shall find to be licensed thereto, either by the queen's majesty, or by one of the universities of Cambridge or Oxford, or by the lord archbishop of Canterbury, or the bishop of London for the time being, under seal. And that this may be published and take better effect, we wish that a true copy hereof shall be taken and delivered to every curate and churchwarden of every of the churches aforesaid. The 16th day of August, 1587."

This paper was signed by "John Canterbury, John London, Val. Dale, Edward Stanhope, and Richard Cozin."\*

It was at this period that Penry was cited before the high commission. He felt, with others, that homilies read from the pulpit were not exactly suited to the exigencies of the nation in such a crisis. Loving the gospel, and believing in its suitability to all the changing circumstances of the church of Christ, he was grieved to find so many professed ministers of Christ "dumb" when they ought to speak, and contented with the lazy reading of a prepared and printed homily, when they ought to speak "out of the abundance of the heart" to the famishing souls of men. In his zeal he gave expression to his sentiments on these points, in such a manner as to give offence to the ruling powers in the church, and thus brought himself for the first time under reprehension.†

\* MS. p. 835. Neal, i. 328.

† Strype's Annals, iii. ii. 94.

the press, to prevent every, even the least expression of the public mind. Sometimes, however, it happens that extreme measures of this nature lead to results the opposite of those which are intended. It was so in this instance. Had more leniency been shown towards the nonconformists, it is more than probable that their writings against the establishment, its constitution, and ceremonies, would have been moderate enough. As it was, mere dissent was stirred up into fierce opposition, and exasperated feelings, pent up by legal repression, found vent for themselves in the strongest of all forms.

A number of individuals formed themselves into a society or club,\* for the purpose of issuing stinging pamphlets and bitter pasquinades against the hierarchy of the day. Some of the most talented and ready amongst them were employed in composing, and others in superintending the printing of these publications. The utmost secrecy was observed both as to the authors and printers.† They were issued and widely circulated. The fearless style in which they were written, the bold and unsparing war they waged against the prelates and their enormous cruelties, the somewhat coarse but effective wit by which they were characterised, gave them a popularity quite unprecedented. Most of all the felt injustice of that condition of things against which they were directed, gave them a fame and an influence which

\* Neal, i. 336.

† These pamphlets were printed at a private press, which was first set up at Mouldsey, in Surrey; then at Fausley, in Northamptonshire; afterwards at Norton, Coventry, Woolston, and Manchester. At the last-named place it was seized by the Earl of Derby. Collier, ii. 606.

they could have acquired in no other circumstance. The principal of these writings were issued in the name of Martin Mar-prelate, a title which plainly indicated their object.\* Although there is much to be excepted against in all these publications,† the oppres-

\* The following are the titles of some of these publications :—  
*"Theses Martinianæ; i. e. certain demonstrative conclusions set down and collected by Martin Mar-prelate the Great, serving as a manifest and sufficient confutation of all that ever the college of cater caps, with their whole band of clergy priests, have or can bring for the defence of their ambitious and anti-christian prelacy. Published by Martin Junior, 1589."* *"Protestation of Martin Mar-prelate; wherein, notwithstanding the surprising of the printer, he maketh it known to the world, that he feareth neither proud priest, antichristian pope, tyrannous prelate, nor godless cater cap, &c. 1589."* *"Hay any work for Cooper? Against Dr. Cooper, Bishop of Winchester. Printed in Europe, not far from some of the bouncing priests, 1590."*

† Martin's defence of himself against those who objected to his style should receive a fair hearing. "I saw," he says, "the cause of Christ's government, and of the bishops anti-christian, to be hidden. The most part of men could not be gotten to read any thing written in the defence of the one and against the other. I bethought me, therefore, of a way whereby men might be drawn to do both. Perceiving the humours of men in these times (especially of those that are in any *place*) to be given to mirth, I took that course; I might lawfully do it, for jesting is lawful by circumstances, even in the greatest matters. The circumstances of time, place, and persons, urged me thereunto. I never profaned the *word* in any jest. Other mirth I used as a covert, wherein I would bring the truth into light, the Lord being the author both of mirth and gravity. . . . My purpose was, and is, to do good. I have done no harm, howsoever some may judge Martin to mar all. They are very weak ones that so think. In that which I have written, I know undoubtedly that I have done the Lord and the state of this kingdom great service, because I have in some sort discovered the greatest enemies thereof."—*Hay any Work for Cooper*, p. 14.

sions practised by the bishops were their ample justification in the opinions of the people. The intemperance of Martin Mar-prelate was "attributed to an honest indignation, while the parties against whom it was directed, were regarded as convicted culprits."\*

Many attempts were made to discover the authors of these tracts, but without success. Several persons were suspected, and some suffered death, but without proof of their alleged criminality.† At length suspicion fell upon Penry, and a warrant was issued for his apprehension; but managing to hear of it in time, he left the country and fled into Scotland.

There is no proof whatever that Penry was concerned in any way in the writing or issuing of these publications. He denied it himself; and John Udal, the prison martyr, in his examination before the commissioners, gave indubitable testimony to this effect, in 1690. Lord Buckhurst, one of the commissioners, interrogated Udal in the following manner:—

*Buckhurst.*—But I pray you, tell me, know you not Penry?

*Udal.*—Yes, my lord; that I do.

*Buckhurst.*—And do you not know him to be Martin?

*Udal.*—No surely; neither do I think him to be Martin.

*Buckhurst.*—What is your reason?

*Udal.*—This, my lord; when first it came out, he (understanding that some gave out that he was thought to be the author) wrote a letter to a friend

\* Price's Hist. of Nonconformity, i. p. 371.

† "Sir Richard Knightley, Sir—Wigston, who had entertained the press, together with the printer, and Humphrey Newman, the disperser, were deeply fined in the Star-Chamber, and others were put to death."—Neal, i. 339.

in London, wherein he did deny it, with such terms as declare him to be ignorant and clear in it.\*

Although, however, Penry was not the author of any of these obnoxious publications, the bishops never forgave him for having been suspected. He remained in Scotland for some time; or from 1590 to 1593. It was whilst he was in that country that he published "A Treatise wherein is manifestly proved, that Reformation and those that are sincerely for the same, are unjustly charged to be enemies unto her Majesty and the State." The following account of the publication is given by Hanbury.†

In a dedication to "the brethren throughout England, Wales, and Ireland," after having shortly described the hindrances to the promotion of the gospel, and the advance it had made "these thirty-one years," he asks, "But what hath England answered?" "Surely," he proceeds, "with an impudent forehead she hath said, 'I will not come near the Holy One. And, as for the building of his house, I will not so much as lift up a finger towards that work; nay, I will continue the desolations thereof. And if any man speaketh a word in the behalf of this house, or bewaileth the misery of it, I will account him an enemy to my state. As for the gospel and the ministers of it, I have already received all the gospels, and all the ministers that I mean to receive. I have received a reading gospel, and a reading ministry, a pompous gospel, and a pompous ministry; a gospel and ministry that strengtheneth the hands of the wicked in his iniquity; a gospel and a ministry that

\* A new Discovery of old Pontifical Practices, 1643, p. 3. Price's Hist. i. 380, 381.

† Hanbury, i. 73—75.



will stoop unto me, and be at my beck either to speak or to be mute when I shall think good. Briefly, I have received a gospel and a ministry that will never trouble my conscience with the sight of my sins; which is all the gospel, and all the ministeries that I mean to receive; and I will make a sure hand that the Lord's house, if I can choose, shall not be otherwise edified than by the hands of such men as bring unto me the foresaid gospel and the foresaid ministry.' "

After this, having touched on the profaneness and impiety of the common people, which "may seem to deserve some excuse," he speaks of those "that would be accounted our prophets and the ministers of the sanctuary," and asks, "Will you see what they are? Alas, you can behold here no other sight but a multitude of desperate and forlorn atheists, that have put the evil day far from them, and endeavoured to persuade their own hearts that God's holy ministry, and the saving health of men's souls, are matters not to be regarded: Lord archbishops and bishops, godless and murdering nonresidents—profane and ignorant idol shepherds, or dumb dogs. I will say no more in this place, but this—How long, Lord, just and true, dost thou suffer thine inheritance to be polluted and laid waste by this uncircumcised generation! O Thou that hearest prayer, let the supplications which thy children have made before thee day and night, for the removing of this our plague, be at length effectual in thine ears, and with speed thrust these caterpillars, as one man, out of our church, and let the memory of them be forgotten in Israel for ever. So be it, Lord, for thy Son Christ's sake." Turning to the magistracy, he says, "they, having suffered themselves to

be led by the forenamed blind guides, must needs stumble at that stone which is offensive unto their leaders." As to their honours, the lords of the council, he adds, "as they have held on since the beginning of her majesty's reign, so, at this day, they have taken greater boldness, and grown more rebellious against the Lord and his cause than ever they were."

"For the further understanding of this particular occasion moving me to write, thou art to understand, beloved in the Lord, that within these few months, a warrant, under six councillors' hands, hath been given out from their honours, and sent by public messengers unto all such places of the land, as there was any likelihood of mine abode. The effect whereof was this—'That one John Penry is an enemy to the state, and if not taken for such heretofore, they should now take knowledge and information thereof from them, and so henceforth account him, . . . that, if they can by any means apprehend or lay hold of him, they shall therein do her majesty good service.' The names of their honours, I do for the reverence which I owe unto her majesty's government, conceal, save only 'John Cant,' as he writeth himself, whom both in respect of his anti-christian prelacy over God's church, and for the notable hatred which he hath ever betrayed towards the Lord and his truth, I think one of the dishonourablest creatures under heaven, and accordingly do account of him. Desiring the Lord, if it be his will, to convert both him and all other the detected enemies of Sion, that their souls may be saved; or, if he hath appointed them to damnation, and meaneth not otherwise to be glorified by them, speedily to disburden the earth of such reprobate

and which he designed to embody in a second part of his former work, referred to a little way back;\* as well as in the determination which he formed of returning to England and laying his thoughts before her majesty. It is probable, also, that whilst in Scotland he wrote to Lord Burghley,† and was encouraged by the manner in which his letters had been received, to proceed in that determination; the result of which, however, was his own ruin.

In 1593, Penry returned to England, resolved to present a petition to the queen, respecting "the abuses of the church of England," and to request permission to preach the gospel in his native land. He repaired to London, and had some intercourse with the Barrowists. Their leaders had just suffered capital punishment. But Penry was not to be turned from his purpose. From the manner in which he wrote afterwards to those who survived, it is evident that he was well acquainted with all that concerned them, and had joined their fellowship as much as circumstances would permit. His enemies however were on the watch for their prey, and soon after his arrival, or in the month of April,‡ apprehended him at Step-

\* In the conclusion of that treatise, from the introductory part of which we have made extracts, Penry writes, "The second part of this book shall be published as soon as the Lord gives me opportunity. I have been enforced, for some causes, to end this more abruptly than I would have wished." As that treatise, however, was published in 1590, the "observations" might be something additional,—the result of his thoughts in Scotland.

† In his letter to Burghley, after his conviction, he reminds his lordship, "with thankfulness," that he had "been always open to receive the writings which I have presumed to send unto you from time to time."

‡ Neal says *May*, but this cannot be.

ney, through the instrumentality of the vicar of that parish.\* Stepney has been associated in every period with the history of the Independents. Being at a short distance from London, and surrounded by fields and groves of trees, it was a convenient resort for those who sought a place of retirement from their persecutors.† Even at this time there were in all probability many Barrowists resident in the village. From these, or from those who were acquainted with their proceedings, the vicar might obtain information respecting Penry. On his apprehension, which was suddenly effected, his papers were seized, and he was committed to prison.

From the moment of his apprehension, Penry seemed to anticipate his fate. He had no fear however; but calmly awaited the result of his trial, writing to his wife "a tender and most Christian letter," and a more lengthy one to his brethren in London, from whom he was now separated. The latter is worthy of being recorded as an admirable specimen of his faith and prudence in this period of trial. It is as follows :—

*"To the distressed, faithful Congregation of Christ in London, and all the Members thereof, whether in bonds, or at liberty.—These be delivered :—*

"My beloved brethren, Mr. F. Johnson, Mr. D. Studley, etc., with the rest of you, both men and women; as if I particularly named you all, which stand members

\* The name of this vicar we have not ascertained.

† For a further account of Stepney, see the preface to Mead's original Sermons on the Jews, by Sir T. W. Blomefield, Bart.; also, Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of the late Rev. Joseph Fletcher, D.D., pp. 310, 311.

of this poor afflicted congregation, whether at liberty or in bonds ; Jesus Christ, that great King and Prince of the kings of the earth, bless you, comfort you with His invincible Spirit, that you may be able to bear and overcome these great trials which you are yet, and I with you, if I live,—to undergo for his name's sake in this testimony.

“ Beloved,—Let us think our lot and portion more than blessed, that now are vouchsafed the favour not only to know and profess, but also to suffer for the sincerity of the gospel ; and let us remember, that great is our reward in heaven if we endure unto the end.

“ I testify unto you for mine own part, as I shall answer before Jesus Christ and his elect angels, that I never saw any truth more clear and undoubted than this witness wherein we stand. 1. Against false Offices ; 2. the Callings ; 3. the Works ; 4. the Maintenance left and retained, in this Land, by and from Popery ; 5. against the Obedience which spiritually, either in soul or in body, is yielded, and the Communion that is had, with these inventions of darkness ; 6. the Mingling of all sorts, in these Assemblies ; 7. the Worship done, but scant, in one of the three parts of the Commission given by our Saviour ; scant done, I say, in one of the three parts of the Commission, by the best Teachers of this Land. And I thank my God, I am not only ready to be bound and banished, but even to die in this cause, by His strength ; yea, my brethren, I greatly long, in regard of myself, to be dissolved, and to live in the blessed kingdom of heaven, with Jesus Christ and his angels ; with Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Job, David, Jeremy, Daniel, Paul, the great

apostle of the Gentiles, and the rest of the holy saints, both men and women; with the glorious kings, prophets, and martyrs and witnesses of Jesus Christ, that have been from the beginning of the world; particularly with my two dear brethren, Mr. Henry Barrowe, and Mr. John Greenwood, which have, last of all, yielded their blood for this precious 'Testimony:' confessing unto you, my brethren and sisters, that if I might live upon the earth the days of Methuselah twice told, and that in no less comfort than Peter, James, and John, were in the mount; and, after this life, might be sure of 'the Kingdom of Heaven,' that yet, to gain all this, I durst not go from the former 'Testimony.'

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I beseech you be of like mind herein with me. I doubt not but you have the same 'precious faith' with me; and are partakers also of far more glorious comfort than my barren and sinful soul can be. Strive for me, and with me, that the Lord our God may make me, and us all, able to end our course with joy and patience. Strive also, that he may stay his blessed hand, if it be his good pleasure, and not make any further breach in his church, by the taking away of any more of us as yet, to the discouraging of the weak, and the lifting up of the horn of our adversaries.

"I would indeed, if it be His good pleasure, live yet with you, to help you to bear that grievous and hard yoke which yet ye are like to sustain, either here, or in a strange land.

"And, my good brethren, seeing banishment, with loss of goods, is likely to betide you all, prepare yourselves for this hard entreaty; and rejoice that you are made worthy for Christ's cause, to suffer, and

bear all these things. And, I beseech you, 'in the bowels of Jesus Christ,' that none of you, in this case, look upon his particular estate; but regard the general state of the church of God, that the same may go, and be kept together, whithersoever it shall please God to send you. Oh, the blessing will be great that shall ensue this care; whereas if you go every man to provide for his own house, and to look for his own family—first neglecting poor Sion; the Lord will set his face against you and scatter you from one end of heaven to the other; neither shall you find a resting-place for the soles of your feet, or a blessing upon any thing you take in hand!

"The Lord, my brethren and sisters, hath not forgotten to be gracious unto Sion; you shall yet find days of peace and of rest, if you continue faithful. This stamping and treading of us under his feet, this subverting of our cause and right in judgment, is done by Him, to the end that we should search and try our ways, and repent us of our carelessness, profaneness, and rebellion in his sight; but he will yet maintain the cause of our souls, and redeem our lives if we return to him; yea, he will be with us in fire and water and will not forsake us, if our hearts be only intent on the serving of him, and especially of the building of Sion, whithersoever we go.

"Let not those of you, then, that either have stocks in your hands, or some likely trades to live by, dispose of yourselves where it may be most commodious for your outward estate, and, in the mean time, suffer the poor ones that have no such means, either to bear the whole work upon their weak shoulders, or to end their days in sorrow and mourning, for want of outward and inward comforts, in the land of

strangers ; for the Lord will be an avenger of all such dealings. But consult with the whole church, yea, with the brethren of other places, how the church may be kept together and built, whithersoever they go. Let not the poor and the friendless be forced to stay behind here, and to break a good conscience for want of your support and kindness unto them, that they may go with you.

“ And here, I humbly beseech you—not in any outward regard, as I shall answer before my God,—that you would take my poor and desolate widow, and my mess of fatherless and friendless orphans with you into exile, whithersoever you go ; and you shall find, I doubt not, that the blessed promises of my God made unto me and mine will accompany them, and even the whole church, for their sakes ; for this also is the Lord’s promise unto the holy seed ; as you shall not need much to demand what they shall eat, or wherewith they shall be clothed ; and in short time, I doubt not, but they will be found helpful and not burthensome to the church : only, I beseech you, let them not continue after you in this land, where they must be forced to go again into Egypt ; and my God will help you even with a joyful return into your own country for it. There are of you who, I doubt not, will be careful of the performance of the will of your dead brother, in this point, who may yet live to show this kindness unto yours ; I will say no more.

“ Be kind, loving, and tender hearted, the one of you towards the other ; labour every way to increase love, and to show the duties of love one of you towards another ; by visiting, comforting, and relieving one the other ; even for ‘ the reproach of the heathen,’ that are round about us, as the Lord said, be watch-



ing in prayer, especially remember those of our brethren that are especially endangered; particularly those our two brethren, Mr. Studley and Robert Bowl, whom our God hath strengthened now to stand in the fore front of the battle. I fear me, that our carelessness was over great to sue unto our God for the lives of these two so notable lights of his church, who now rest with him, and that as he took them away for many respects seeming good to his wisdom; so also that we might learn to be more careful in prayer in all such causes. Pray for them, my brethren; and for our brother *Mr. Francis Johnson*; and for me, who am likely to end my days either with them or before them;—that our God may spare us unto his church, if it be his good pleasure, or give us exceeding faithfulness: and be every way comfortable unto the sister and wife of the dead; I mean, unto my beloved Mr. Barrowe and Mr. Greenwood; whom I most heartily salute, and desire much to be comforted in their God; who, by his blessings from above, will countervail unto them the want of so notable a brother and a husband.

“I would wish you earnestly to write, yea, to send, if you may, to comfort the brethren in the west and north countries, that they faint not in these troubles; and that also you may have their advice, and they of yours, what to do in these desolate times. And if you think it anything for their further comfort and direction, send them, conveniently, a copy of this my letter, and of the declaration of my faith and allegiance; wishing them, before whomsoever they be called, that their own mouths be not had in witness against them, in anything. Yea, I would wish you and them to be together, if you may, whithersoever you shall be

banished ; and to this purpose, to bethink you beforehand where to be ; yea, to send some who may be meet to prepare you some resting-place. And, be all of you assured, that He who is your God in England, will be your God in any land under the whole heaven ; for the earth and the fulness thereof are his, and blessed are they that for his cause are bereaved of any part of the same.

“ Finally, my brethren, the eternal God bless you and yours, that I may meet with you all, unto my comfort, in the blessed kingdom of heaven. Thus, having from my heart, and with tears, performed, it may be, my last duty towards you in this life, I salute you all in the Lord, both men and women ; even those whom I have not named, as heartily as those whose names I have mentioned ; for all your names I know not. And, remember to stand steadfast and faithful in Jesus Christ, as you have received him, unto your immortality ; and may He confirm and establish you to the end, for the praise of his glory. Amen.

“ Your loving brother in the patience and sufferings of the gospel, John Penry ; a witness of Christ in this life, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.

“ The twenty-fourth of the fourth month, April, 1593.” \*

On Penry’s apprehension, it was intended to indict him for the books which had been published in his name. By the advice of his counsel, however, he drew up a “ declaration,” dated May, 16th, to the effect that he was “ not in danger of the law for the books published in his name.” In this declaration he observed,

\* Examination of Barrow, Greenwood, and Penry. Marshall, p. 45 ; Hanbury, i. 75—78.

that the statute of the 23rd of Elizabeth was not intended to be applicable to such as wrote against the hierarchy of the church only, for then it must condemn many of the most learned protestants at home and abroad, but to such as defamed her majesty's royal person. He, however, had always written most dutifully of her majesty's person and government, having never encouraged sedition or insurrection against her majesty, but the contrary: nor had he ever been at any "assembly or conventicle where any under or above the number of twelve were assembled, with force of arms or otherwise, to alter anything established by law." Nor was it his opinion that private persons should, of their own authority, attempt any such thing.\*

In order to avoid the legal argument which might arise from this "declaration," the Lord Chief Justice Popham set it aside, and instead of receiving the indictment on the books which Penry had published, took it on the draft of a *petition*, and some private *observations*, referred to before, which had been drawn up in Scotland, and were found among his papers. The heads of the petition were as follows,

"The last days of your reign are turned rather against Jesus Christ and his gospel, than to the maintenance of the same.

"I have great cause of complaint, *madam*; nay, the Lord and his church have cause to complain of your government; because we, your subjects, this day, are not permitted to serve our God under your government according to his *word*, but are sold to be bond-slaves, not only to our affections, to do what we

\* Strype's Whitgift, ii. 181; Neal, i. 377.

will, so that we keep ourselves within the compass of established civil laws, but also to be servants to the *man of sin*, and his ordinances.

"It is not the force that we seem to fear that will come upon us (for the Lord may destroy both; you for denying, and us for slack-seeking of his will), by strangers: I come unto you with it: if you will hear it, our cause may be eased; if not, that posterity may know that you have been dealt with, and that this age may know that there is no expectation to be looked for at your hands.

"Among the rest of the princes under the gospel, that have been drawn to oppose it, you must think yourself to be one; for until you see this, *madam*, you see not yourself, and they are but sycophants and flatterers whoever tell you otherwise. Your standing is and has been by the gospel. It is little beholden to you for anything that appears. The practice of your government shows, that if you could have ruled without the gospel, it would have been doubtful whether the gospel should be established or not; for now that you are established in your throne by the gospel, you suffer it to reach no farther than the end of your sceptre limiteth unto it.

"If we had had queen *Mary's* days, I think we should have had as flourishing a church this day as ever any; for it is well known that there was then in *London*, under the burden, and in exile, more flourishing churches than any now tolerated by your authority.

"Now, whereas we should have your help both to join ourselves with the true church, and reject the false, and all the ordinances thereof, we are in your kingdom permitted to do nothing; but accounted *se-*

*ditious*, if we affirm either the one or the other of the former points ; and therefore, *madam*, you are not so much an adversary to us poor men, as unto Jesus Christ, and the wealth of his kingdom.

“ If we cannot have your favour, but by omitting our duty to God, we are unworthy of it ; and, by God’s grace, we mean not to purchase it so dear.

“ But, *madam*, thus much we must needs say, that in all likelihood, if the days of your sister queen *Mary*, and her persecution, had continued unto this day, that the church of God in *England* had been far more flourishing than at this day it is ; for then, *madam*, the church of God within this land, and elsewhere, being strangers, enjoyed the ordinances of God’s holy word, as far as then they saw.

“ But since *your majesty* came unto your crown, you have had whole Christ Jesus, God and man ; but we must serve him only in heart.

“ And if those days had continued to this time, and those lights risen therein, which by the mercy of God have shined in *England*, it is not to be doubted but the church of *England*, even in England, had far surpassed all the reformed churches in the world.

“ Then, *madam*, any of our brethren durst not have been seen within the tents of antichrist ; now they are ready to defend them to be the Lord’s, and that he has no other tabernacle upon earth but them. Our brethren then durst not temporize in the cause of God, because the Lord ruled himself in his church, by his own laws, in a good measure ; but now, behold ! they may do what they will, for any sword that the church has to draw against them, if they contain themselves within your laws.

“ This peace, under these conditions, we cannot en-

joy ; and therefore, for anything that I can see, queen *Mary's* days will be set up again, or we must needs temporize. The whole truth we must not speak ; the whole truth we must not profess. Your *state* must have a stroke above the truth of God.

"Now, *madam*, your majesty may consider what good the church of God hath taken at your hands, even outward peace, with the absence of Christ Jesus in his ordinances ; otherwise as great troubles are likely to come as ever were in the days of your sister.

"As for the council and clergy, if we bring any suit unto them, we have no other answer but that which *Pharaoh* gives to the Lord's messengers, touching the state of the church under his government.

"For when any are called for this cause before your council, or the judges of the land, they must take this for granted, once for all, that the uprightness of their cause will profit them nothing, if the law of the land be against them ; for your council and judges have so well profited in religion, that they will stick to say, that they come not to consult whether the matter be with or against the *word* or not, but their purpose is to take the penalty of the transgressions against your laws.

"If your council were wise, they would not kindle your wrath against us ; but, *madam*, if you give ear to their words, no marvel though you have no better counsellors."\*

It should be remembered that this is only a rough copy of the petition which Penry had intended to present to the queen. Undoubtedly it expresses his

\* Life of Whitgift, p. 411 ; Neal, i. 375—377.

sentiments; but many things would have been worded differently before its presentation.

The "observations" were of a miscellaneous nature; being notes hurriedly made of objections which he had heard in Scotland against the queen's government; and which he intended to have examined afterwards at leisure; together with private memoranda respecting his own state of mind, similar to the diaries of good men in various periods.\*

On such materials as these Penry was tried. His examination was conducted with great sharpness, and his answers to many of the questions put to him, confirmed his persecutors in their determination to make him their victim.† During the course of the trial, he wrote the following confession, and delivered it to Mr. Justice Young. He calls it his "Confession of faith and allegiance unto the Lord and her majesty, written since my imprisonment."

"Touching my faith, I do believe with my heart, and confess with my tongue, that there is no God but the true God only, which that written word teacheth, to be one in substance and three in person, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; three distinct persons of one and the self same substance. This most high God, who also is my God in Christ Jesus, I believe to be the Creator, Preserver, Maintainer, Sovereign,

\* See his own description of the observations farther on.

† In his examination, addressing Popham, he said, "I am bound to seek the comfort of the word and sacraments, where I may have them without submitting to any other ecclesiastical government than that which is derived from Jesus Christ . . . . The church of Christ, in all its affairs, is perfect without archbishops, lord-bishops, archdeacons, &c.; the state, being a civil community, is perfect without them."—Exam. Marshall, p. 39.

Lord, and Supreme Commander of all creatures in heaven and on earth,—men and angels, both good and bad.

“I do believe, that nothing doth or can come to pass, either in heaven or on earth, but by the fore-appointed and determinate will, purpose, counsel, direction—yea, without the most holy, most wise and upright commandments, according to the counsel of His own will.

“All men, by nature, I believe to be the children of wrath, and saved only by grace;—the sufferings and righteousness of Christ Jesus apprehended by true faith.

“Christ Jesus, in regard of his natures, I believe to be God and man; even God alone, blessed for ever more. And in respect of his offices, to be the only king, priest, and prophet of his church; the which offices he so fully accomplished in the days of his flesh, by the manifesting of the whole will of his Father, through his preaching and teaching the full redemption of his church by his death and resurrection; and receiving full absolute power in heaven and on earth from his Father, in such sort, as he is not to retain a successor in any of these his offices, but is consecrated alone to them all for evermore.

“True faith, I believe to be the persuasion of the heart, whereby the soul is truly assured of remission of sins, and imputation of righteousness through Christ. This true faith belongeth only to God’s elect, and hath perseverance unto the end. With this true faith also, is unseparably joined, as the fruit thereof, a dying unto sin, and a living unto righteousness in such sort, that the members of Christ have a continual battle in them against sin; the which, by the



highness, I shall intreat the Lord that you may not want your reward for this work. I know there is none that can take hold of me; and yet I refer myself wholly to her determination, and will be contented with the sentence which the Lord shall move her to give me.

“Though mine innocency may stand me in no stead before an earthly tribunal, yet I know that I shall have the reward hereof before the judgment-seat of the great King. And the merciful Lord, who relieveth the widow and fatherless, will reward my desolate orphans and friendless widow that I leave behind me, and even hear their cry, for he is merciful.

“Being likely to trouble your lordship with no more letters, I do with thankfulness acknowledge your honor's favour towards me, in that you have been always open to receive the writings which I have presumed to send unto you from time to time. And in this my last, I protest before the Lord God, that I have written nothing but truth unto your lordship in any of my letters, that I know of.

“Thus, preparing myself, not so much for an unjust verdict, and an undeserved doom in this life, as unto that blessed crown of glory which of the great mercy of my God, is ready for me in heaven, I humbly betake your lordship unto the hands of the just Lord. May 22nd, 1593. Your lordship's most humble in the Lord, John Penry.”\*

The “writing” referred to at the commencement of this letter as being “herein inclosed,” was a *protestation* in which he gives a faithful account of him-

\* Strype's Whitgift, ii. 184; Price's Hist. i. 413—415.

self, his writings, and his aims, and yet further vindicates his own innocence. Referring to the document Mr. Hallam observes, "Penry's protestation at his death is in a style of the most affecting and simple eloquence."\* We have already given one extract from it: the chief part of the remainder is as follows:—

"In these my intercepted writings, which are now brought against me, containing in them not only a particular record of my daily corruptions, for and against the which I craved mercy and strength at the Lord's hands; but also of all the special sins whereof my conscience could accuse me in all my life, even unto the day of my coming out of Scotland; it will easily appear whether my soul was ever privy unto any offence committed by me against her majesty; save only this (whereof I here complain), namely, that I was not so careful in praying for her preservation and welfare as I desired and laboured to have been. And yet, I thank the Lord, I remember not that that day hath passed over my head, since under her government I first came unto the knowledge of the truth, wherein I have not commended her estate unto his *Majesty*. I deal in these my most secret papers without guile; as in his sight, whom I know to be the revealer of secrets, and at hand. I craved the healing of a bruised conscience. Wherefore it concerned me not to collude

\* Hallam's Const. Hist. i. 278, note. He adds, however, "It is a striking contrast to the coarse abuse for which he suffered. The authors of Martin Mar-prelate were never fully discovered; but Penry seems not to deny his concern in it." Hallam is less careful than usual in making this statement, as well as in the text. Penry was *not tried* on the charge of being concerned in Martin's doings; which, coupled with Udal's testimony, is sufficient to prove that he was not *now* "suspected" of being so. Many other reasons might be mentioned, if needful.

with him, though I might do the same with man. Such dealing might well augment the intolerable burden of my wearied soul ; but cure my wound it could not. And therefore I may truly say, if ever I had been guilty of any such crime, that there it would have been set down, even when I poured the very secrets of my heart before the mercy seat of the *Ever Living*.

“ Well, I may be indicted, arraigned, condemned, and end the days of my wearisome pilgrimage as a felon—yea, or traitor against my natural sovereign ; but I thank my God, heaven and earth shall not be able to convict me thereof. And I thank God, that whensoever an end of my days comes, as I look not to live this week to an end, mine innocency shall benefit so much, as I shall die queen Elizabeth’s most faithful subject, even in the conscience of my very adversaries themselves, if they will be the beholders thereof.

“ I never took myself for a rebuker, much less for a reformer, of states and kingdoms ; far was that from me ; yet in the discharge of my conscience all the world must bear with me, if I prefer my testimony to the truth of Jesus Christ before the favour of any creature. An enemy unto any good order and policy, either in church or commonwealth, was I never. All good learning and knowledge of the arts and tongues I laboured to attain unto, and to promote to the uttermost of my power. Whatsoever I wrote in religion, the same I did simply, for no other end than for the bringing of God’s truth to light. I never did anything in His cause (Lord, thou art witness !) for contention, vain-glory, or to draw disciples after me ; or to be accounted singular. Whatsoever I wrote or held beside the warrant of the *written Word*, I have always warned all men to leave. And wherein I saw

that I had erred myself, I have, as all this land doth now know, confessed my ignorance, and framed my judgment and practice according to the truth of the Word.

“That brief confession of my faith and allegiance unto the Lord and her majesty, written since my imprisonment, and delivered to the worshipful Mr. Justice Young, I take, as I shall answer before Jesus Christ and the elect angels, to contain nothing but God’s eternal verity in it. And, therefore, if my blood were an ocean sea, and every drop thereof were a life unto me, I would give them all, by the help of the Lord, for the maintenance of the same, my confession. Yet if any error can be showed therein, that will I not maintain. Otherwise, far be it that either the saving of an earthly life; the regard which in nature I ought to have to the desolate outward state of a poor friendless widow, and four poor fatherless infants, whereof the eldest is not above four years old, which I am to leave behind me; or any other outward thing, should enforce me, by the denial of God’s truth, contrary to my conscience, to lose \* mine own soul. The Lord, I trust, will never give me over unto this sin. Great things in this life I never sought for, not so much as in thought. A mean and base outward state, according to my mean condition, I was content with. Sufficiency I have had, with great outward troubles; but most contented I was with my lot; and content I am, and shall be, with my undeserved and timely death: beseeching the Lord, that it be not laid to the charge of any creature in this land. For I do, from my heart, forgive all those that seek my life, as I de-

\* *Leese* in the original.

sire to be forgiven in the day of strict account; praying for them, as for my own soul, that although upon earth we cannot accord, we may yet meet in heaven unto our eternal comfort and unity; where all controversies shall be at an end. And if my death can procure any quietness to the church of God or the state, I shall rejoice. Many such subjects I wish unto my prince; though no such reward unto any of them.

“My earnest request is, that her majesty may be acquainted with these things before my death, or at least after my departure.

“Subscribed with the heart and the hand, which never devised or wrote anything to the discredit or defamation of my sovereign, queen Elizabeth: I take it on my death, as I hope to have a life after this.

“By me, John Penry.”\*

This affecting protestation had no effect. Whitgift was bent upon adding Penry to the number of his victims. All haste was made to accomplish his object. On the 25th of May, Penry was sentenced to die as a felon; and four days after was executed.

“It was never known before this time,” says Neal, “that a minister and a scholar was condemned to death for private papers found in his study; nor do I remember more than one since that time, in whose case it was given for law, that *scribere est agere*,\* that to write has been construed an overt act. But Penry must die, right or wrong. The archbishop was the first man who signed the warrant for his execution. The warrant was sent immediately to the

\* Strype's Whitgift; App. iv. 18, p. 176.

† To write is to act.

sheriff, who the very same day erected a gallows at St. Thomas Waterings; and while the prisoner was at dinner, sent his officers to bid him make ready, for he must die that afternoon. Accordingly, he was carried to the place of execution; when he came thither, the sheriff would not suffer him to speak to the people, nor make any profession of his faith towards God, or his loyalty to the queen, but ordered him to be turned off in a hurry about five of the clock in the evening, May 29th, 1593, in the thirty-fourth year of his age." \*

It has been affirmed by some that, before his death, Penry confessed himself worthy of the sentence passed upon him. "I have received it," says Cotton, from Mr. Hildersham, a man of a thousand, that Mr. Penry did ingenuously acknowledge before his death, that though he had not deserved death for any dishonour put upon the queen by that work which was found in his study, and intended by himself to be presented to her own hand; nor by the compiling of Martin Mar-prelate,—of both which he was falsely charged;—yet he confessed he deserved death at the queen's hand, for that he had seduced many of her loyal subjects to a separation from hearing the Word of Life in the parish churches; which, though himself had learned to discern the evil thereof, yet he could never prevail to recover divers of her subjects whom he had seduced; and therefore the blood of their souls was now justly required at his hands."†

Even if Mr. Hildersham had not been "a strong

\* Neal, i. 379.

† Cotton's reply to R. Williams, quoted in Hanbury, i. 80; and in Stillingfleet's *Unreasonableness of Separation*, p. 51. The last-mentioned writer receives any statement which tells in any way against the Brownists.

enemy to the Brownists," of which there is no doubt, such a statement as this is utterly unworthy of credence. When did he thus express himself? Was the confession found in those secret papers which were seized in his study; and if so, how was it that it was not adduced against him, or rather as an extenuating circumstance in his favour? The statement, however, implies that this confession was made somewhere immediately before his death; and we again enquire—when? The letter to Lord Burghley and the protestation were composed immediately before his death; and in them there is no such confession. The whole statement is a most disingenuous libel on the character of an intrepid and consistent Christian man.

Penry "died as he had lived, in the consistent expression of Christian principles, and in the confident hope of the glory of his Lord and master."\* Although a young man, he was of great service by his talents, zeal, and Christian discretion,† to the cause which he espoused. His presence emboldened his friends, and his genius was feared by his enemies. The circumstance that the Martin Mar-prelate tracts were ascribed to him, proved that he was regarded as a man of unquestioned daring and ability; and yet his own avowed writings, especially his protestation, afforded proof that he was as humble as he was bold, and as ready to die in a just cause as any martyr of past times. Wales lost in him its earliest missionary. England, also, lost one of its most enlightened Christian philanthropists.

\* Price's Hist. i. 416.

† Robinson refers to Penry's writings in confirmation of his own enlightened and charitable views respecting those from whom the Independents so widely differed.—Hanbury, i. 259.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE INDEPENDENTS IN EXILE.

THE odium which attached to the high commissioners through the severities inflicted on Barrowe and Greenwood, and more especially on Penry, was such as to convince the court that it would not be prudent to persist in such an extreme course.\* It was evident that the religious convictions of those who were so obnoxious to the bishops were more powerful than the fear of death. It was also evident, that the passive heroism exhibited by such as had suffered the extreme penalty of the law, had won the admiration of the masses of the people, and the sympathy of all who were not bereft of the common feelings of humanity; while their loyalty, evinced in the most unequivocal manner, and on so many occasions, induced most parties to attribute the severe measures taken against them to the vindictiveness of the bishops rather than to any necessity of state. In consequence of this turn of affairs, it was determined, from this time, to change the method of public procedure against the separatists.

From this time, therefore, ecclesiastical offenders were no longer indicted on the statute 23rd of Eliza-

\* It is said that the queen herself was displeased when she heard of the devotion and loyalty of the sufferers.—Neal, i. 379.



beth,\* which made it treasonable to disobey the ecclesiastical laws of the land; the 35th of Elizabeth being substituted for it. This last statute inflicted banishment, or an "abjuring of the realm," on such as refused to attend their parish church. This change of policy was, in many respects, a great relief for the Independents, and led to some important results. Not only was the way prepared at home for a wider diffusion of scriptural principles; but the liberty enjoyed abroad, by such as were banished, of discussing great principles, and publishing their sentiments to the world, was a necessary preliminary to the further ascertainment and advancement of truth.

At the time when this new line of policy began to be acted upon, most of the gaols, as we have already seen, were crowded. They were now thrown open and cleared, on the condition that the prisoners should leave the country. This was a great relief. Many who had been imprisoned for years were now at liberty; and, although it was a hardship to be compelled to leave their native land, where they had hoped to be still of some service in winning their fellow countrymen over to the cause of truth, it was not without joy and gratitude that they passed from the scenes of oppression and ecclesiastical misrule, to other lands where they might worship God according to the dictates of conscience and the Divine Word. It was evident, however, when these persecuted exiles found themselves as strangers in other countries, that they were indebted to the statesmen, rather than to the ecclesiastical rulers, of the day for the concession

\* Two persons, however, suffered the extreme penalty in the next reign, in 1611,—an Arian in London and a Baptist in Lichfield.

which had been granted. One of these exiles informs us that they were followed by letters which decried them to the civil authorities in the Dutch states and elsewhere,\* as a discontented, factious, and conceited people who could not be tolerated in their own land, and whom therefore they should treat accordingly. In consequence of this ungenerous procedure, the exiled parties were received with great discourtesy, and in many cases were subject to the most unmerited obloquy, in the various towns and cities to which they repaired. This was more especially the case with the Independents. Such as were in favour of presbyterian views found many parties abroad prepared to sympathise with them, on account of identity of principles ; but the Brownists and Barrowists were "a people every where spoken against."

In these statements we refer mainly to the band of exiles who left their country when the new policy was first adopted. In the course of a year from this period, fresh prisoners filled the gaols ; and from time to time fresh exiles passed over to join their brethren. The very policy employed, emboldened many to avow their sentiments who had cherished them in secret before ; and probably many parties felt that it would be preferable on the whole to act an obnoxious part with the prospect of banishment, rather than to remain at home as suspected parties in continual fear of apprehension.

Although it is not a part of our plan to enter into

\* Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague, Leyden, and Utrecht, were the principal cities of refuge for the persecuted exiles.

minute details respecting the history of those parties who were driven from their home and country to foreign lands, it is but right that our readers should be acquainted with the principal particulars, more especially such as had an influence in advancing the determination of right principles, and in giving an impulse to the cause of Independency at home.

Among the first body of exiles was one whose name has already been mentioned, and whose character and talents were such as to require specific notice. We refer to Francis Johnson. Of his early history nothing has reached us. He was educated at Christ's College, Cambridge, of which he became a fellow. While at Cambridge he imbibed puritan or presbyterian principles, together with many besides, and publicly advocated them in a sermon preached at St. Mary's, in January, 1588-9. In consequence of this he was called upon to retract what he had advanced, and on refusing to do so was expelled the university in October of the same year. Lord Burghley, who was the chancellor of the university, advised Johnson to make an appeal from this severe decision. But the vice-chancellor and the heads of houses carried matters with a high hand, resisted the attempt, and committed Johnson to prison, without bail, for his alleged contumacy in making it. For a whole year the university was agitated by the proceedings connected with this case. Many of the fellows took the part of Johnson, and remonstrated against the unjust severity of the vice-chancellor. The ecclesiastical party, however, was too powerful, being backed by the sanction and authority of the bishops; and Johnson felt it to be his wisest course

to abandon any further attempts to appeal. On this he was set at liberty.\*

After this, or in 1592, Johnson was again apprehended and imprisoned, together with many other leading puritans, for refusing to take the oath *ex officio mero*,† in order to confess to the conduct of themselves and their brethren. Eventually, however, they complied, believing as they did, that there was nothing criminal in their proceedings; and upon so doing they were released.

Up to this period Johnson was a puritan only, had associated with the puritan party in various proceedings in various parts of the kingdom, and had subscribed his name to a book entitled "the Holy Discipline of the Church, described in the Word of God."‡ So far from approving of the conduct of the separatists, he had opposed them, and, as Henry Jacob reminded him afterwards, with some earnestness.§ His sentiments, however, from this time underwent a gradual change. He was led to see that there was as little scriptural warrant for the authority of synods and general assemblies as for that of diocesan bishops; and hence we find him soon after connected with the congregational church in London, whose

\* Brook's Puritans, ii. 96.

† This oath, called also a "corporal oath," bound a person taking it to answer any questions that might be put, however criminalizing the consequences might be.

‡ This book expressed the various particulars of the presbyterian system. It was drawn up by Travers in Latin, in 1574, at Geneva, and afterwards translated into English by Cartwright. It is given in Neal's Appendix, No. II.

§ Hanbury, i. 84.

origin we have related elsewhere. Johnson's accession was of considerable advantage to the cause of Independency.\* His character was unimpeachable, and by his enlightened views and his lucid writings, he was the means of winning over some important parties to the cause which he had himself espoused. He settled at Amsterdam with the greater portion of his flock, and was concerned in many controversies, some of them painful ones, to which we shall have occasion to refer more particularly.

In the course of a short time after Johnson's settlement in Holland,† another individual joined him whose abilities were of the first order. This was no less a person than Henry Ainsworth, a man whose vast learning obtained for him a continental reputation. "A higher testimony of the veneration he has acquired by his writings, cannot well be expected, than that which occurs in all the late editions of Moreri's Dictionary, and even in the last;‡ wherein, with great pains, they distinguish between 'Henry Ainsworth, the *able commentator* on the scriptures,' and 'Henry Ainsworth, the *heresiarch*, who was one of the chiefs of the Brownists, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth;' and very gravely tell us that 'we must

\* Johnson repudiated the name of "Brownist;" but because of Browne's apostasy only. He admits that Browne's *sentiments* were substantially the same as his. Referring to Browne in one of his publications, he writes, "holding, as we hear, in his judgment, the truth we profess."—Answer to Jacob, chap. i. p. 2.

† It seems scarcely probable that Ainsworth belonged to Johnson's church in London. His name does not occur in its history, neither do we find it in the list of those who were imprisoned.

‡ Le Grand Dictionnaire Historique, 10 tomes, folio.

have a care not to confound them:’ nevertheless, nothing is more certain than that these two were the same man!’\*

Nothing certain is known of this distinguished scholar until the period on which we have entered. Where he was born, and obtained his education—what college or university had the honour of sending him forth as one of the first scholars of his age—in what circumstances he first joined the oppressed and persecuted Brownists—are facts involved in obscurity. “Even his very existence,” says Hanbury, “is unrecorded before the memorable year 1592-3; after which he is found in close alliance with the church of exiles, ‘in a blind lane at Amsterdam.’” On joining the exiles, he was chosen to the office of teacher, in conjunction with Johnson as pastor, and rendered much service to the cause of scriptural truth.

Although there can be little doubt that Ainsworth was an Englishman, it is not known when he left his country and settled in Holland. It appears from his correspondence, that he was there in 1596;† and Hornbeck has related, that he went over from that country to Ireland, where he left some disciples.‡ It is also ascertained, that he was at first and for some time in circumstances of great poverty and obscurity, living upon “ninepence a week, and some boiled roots.”§ His occupation was that of a bookseller’s porter; and his master was the first to discover his skill in the Hebrew language, and make it known to

\* *Biographia Britanica*, vol. i. p. 102.

† *Limborch’s Epist. Viror. Præstant. et Erudit. Ep.* 37.

‡ *Summa Controv.* p. 740.

§ *Cotton’s Reply to R. Williams*, p. 119.

the world.\* Whether he was in this situation when he joined the church of the exiles at Amsterdam, we are not informed. It may, however, have been so; and it shows the good sense of the members of it that they selected such a man as Ainsworth, notwithstanding his poverty, for their teacher. Indeed, the circumstances of the exiles generally were scarcely raised above those of the poorest. They had left their own land with little or nothing. Their property at home had been confiscated, or had melted away under a system of fines and imprisonment. Their maintenance now depended on their industry; and in seeking it, they were obstructed on all hands. The civil authorities tolerated them, but showed no regard for their welfare; while the town's clergy looked down upon them either with jealousy or contempt. .

Ainsworth and Johnson, the latter retaining his office as pastor, acted together with great unanimity for a long period. In consequence of the malicious reports which had been circulated respecting the opinions of the Brownists, it was felt needful to give a public statement of their real character and merits. This was the more necessary, inasmuch as there were learned men in Amsterdam, at this period, who were not backward in publishing their own erroneous sentiments. Arminius, whose name is too well known to require further notice, had been appointed a pastor in the same city in 1588, and was at this time very earnest in divulging his peculiar doctrines.† Junius, also, the celebrated controversialist, was using his influence as a divinity professor against them. And many parties,

\* Wilson's Dissenting Churches, i. 23.

† For an Account of Arminius and his doctrines, see Mosheim cent. xvii. sect. ii. part ii. chap. iii.

more candid than the rest, were willing to receive further explanations respecting the new party, so much reviled and "spoken against."

It appears that, in 1596, Johnson had published "the confession of faith of certain English people, living in the low countries, exiled." In 1598, this document was republished; and afterwards, in 1602, it was issued again as the joint production of Johnson and Ainsworth. The latter translated it into the Latin, for the benefit of the learned in all countries, and sent it forth in his own name.

This confession, issued under these circumstances, is worthy of notice in this history. We shall, therefore, lay some extracts from it before our readers.\*

A reference is made in the preface to the cause for which they were now suffering exile from their native land.

"It may seem strange," said they, "unto thee, Christian reader, that any of the English nation should, for the sake of the gospel, be forced to forsake their native country, and live in exile; especially in these days, when the gospel seemeth to have free passage and to flourish in that land. And for this cause, hath our exile been hardly thought of by many, and evil spoken of by some, who know not, as it seemeth, either the true estate of the church of England, or the causes of our forsaking and separating from the same; but, hearing 'this sect,' as they call it, to be 'everywhere spoken against,' have, without all further search, accounted and divulged us as heretics, or schismatics, at the least; yea, some, and such as worst might,\*

\* See a more full account in Hanbury.

† *e. g.* the bishops of the English church.



have sought the increase of our afflictions even here also, if they could ; which thing they have both secretly and openly attempted. And though we could, for our parts, well have borne this rebuke of Christ in silence, and left our cause to him who judgeth justly all the children of men ; yet, for the manifestation and clearing of the truth of God from reproach of men, and for the bringing of others together with ourselves to the same knowledge and fellowship of the gospel, we have thought it needful, and our duty, to make known unto the world our unfeigned faith in God, and loyal obedience towards our prince, and all governors set over us in the Lord, together with the reasons of our leaving the ministry, worship, and church of England ; which are not, as they pretend, for some *few* faults and corruptions remaining, such as we acknowledge may be found in the perfectest church on earth."

After this, they avow their allegiance to the civil government, define the various particulars in respect to which they dissent from the establishment in England, and thus conclude:—"Concerning ourselves, who through the mercy of God have found a place of rest in this land, for which benefit we are always and everywhere thankful, we desire, Christian reader, thy charitable and Christian opinion of and holy prayers unto God for us, whose kingdom we seek, whose ordinances we desire to establish and obey ; protesting, with good consciences, that it is the truth of his gospel only for which we strive against those cursed relics of antichristian apostacy ; unto which we dare in no wise submit ourselves—no, not for a moment. But because we have been very grievously slandered in our own nation, and the bruit thereof hath followed us unto this land, whereby we have been hardly deemed of by

many without cause, we have been forced, at length to publish this brief but true Confession of our Faith, for the clearing of ourselves from slander, and satisfying of many who desired to know the things we hold."

The confession which follows the above, comprises doctrine and discipline in forty-five articles. The more important of these in relation to our object are those which we now proceed to lay before the reader.

ART. XXIII. "As every Christian congregation hath power and commandment to elect and ordain their own ministry, according to the rules in God's Word prescribed, and whilst they shall faithfully execute their office, to have them in superabundant love for their works' sake, to provide for them, to honour them and reverence them, according to the dignity of the office they execute; so have they also power and commandment when any such default, either in their life, doctrine, or administration, breaketh out, as by the rule of the Word debarreth them from, or depriveth them of their ministry, by due order to depose them from the ministry they exercised; yea, if the case so require, and they remain obstinate and impenitent, orderly to cut them off by excommunication.

XXIV. "Christ hath given this power to receive in or cut off any member, to the whole body together of every Christian congregation, and not to any one member apart, or to more members sequestered from the whole, or to any other congregation, to do it for them. Yet so as each congregation ought to use the best help they can hereunto, and the most meet member they have, to pronounce the same in their public assembly.

XXV. "Every member of each Christian congre-

gation, how excellent, great, or learned soever, ought to be subject to this censure and judgment of Christ. Yet ought not the church, without great care and due advice, to proceed against such public persons."

After showing the unscriptural nature of the English hierarchy and their ecclesiastical assemblies, and asserting that they "cannot be said, in this confusion and subjection, truly to have Christ *their* Prophet, Priest, and King," the faithful are admonished "with speed to come forth of this antichristian estate; leaving the suppression of it unto the Magistrate to whom it belongeth."

XXXIII. "Being come forth of this antichristian estate. unto the freedom and true profession of Christ, besides the instructing and well-guiding of their own families, they are willingly to join together in Christian communion and orderly covenant, and by free confession of the faith and obedience of Christ, to unite themselves into peculiar and visible congregations; wherein, as members of one body, whereof Christ is the only Head, they are to worship and serve God according to his Word; remembering to keep holy the Lord's day.

XXXIV. "Then, also, such to whom God hath given gifts to interpret the scriptures, tried in the exercise of prophecy, attending to study and learning, may and ought, by the appointment of the congregation, to prophecy, according to the proportion of faith, and so to teach publiely the Word of God, for the edification, exhortation, and comfort of the church; until such time as the people be meet for, and God manifest men with able gifts and fitness to, such office or offices as Christ hath appointed to the public ministry of his church; but no sacraments to be ad-

ministered until the pastors or teachers be chosen and ordained into their office.

XXXVI. "Thus, being rightly gathered, established, and still proceeding in Christian communion and obedience of the gospel of Christ, none is to separate for faults and corruptions which may, and so long as the church consisteth of mortal men will fall out and arise among them, even in true constituted churches; but by due order to seek redress thereof.

XXXVII. "Such as yet see not the truth, may, notwithstanding, hear the public doctrine and prayers of the church; and with all meekness are to be sought by all means: yet none who are grown in years may be received into their communion as members, but such as do make confession of their faith, publicly desiring to be received as members, and promising to walk in the obedience of Christ: neither any infants, but such as are the seed of the faithful by one of the parents, or under their education and government. And further, not any from one congregation to be received members in another, without bringing certificate of their former estate and present purpose.

XXXVIII. "And, although the particular congregations be thus distinct and several bodies, every one as a compact and knit city in itself, yet are they all to walk by one and the same rule; and, by all means convenient, to have the counsel and help one of another in all needful affairs of the church, as members of one body in the common faith, under Christ their only Head.

XLIII. "Unto all men is to be given whatsoever is due to them. Tributes, customs, and all other such lawful and accustomed duties, ought willingly and orderly to be paid and performed; our lands, goods,

and bodies, to be submitted in the Lord to the magistrate's pleasure. And the magistrates themselves every way to be acknowledged, revered, and obeyed according to godliness; not because of wrath only, but also for conscience sake: and, finally, all men so to be esteemed and regarded, as is due and meet for their place, age, estate, and condition.

XLIV. "And thus, we labour to give unto God that which is God's, and unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's, and unto all men that which belongeth unto them; endeavouring ourselves to have always a clear conscience towards God and towards men."

From these extracts it appears that while the Independents of Amsterdam, under Johnson and Ainsworth regarded every Christian congregation or local church as a self-governing body, yet there was a connection between the congregations, in the transfer of members from the church in one locality to that in another, wherever such transfer was needful through change of residence on the part of any of the members. In the thirty-ninth article there is a distinct recognition of the unity of the churches thus related, for purposes of mutual counsel and support.

The thirty-fourth article is perhaps more stringent than is needful in respect to the sacraments, inasmuch as there are scriptural cases in which churches had a church-state before any offices were appointed, and in all probability had the sacraments, as they are termed, administered in their midst.\*

The greatest error held by these parties pertains to the third principle of Independency, or that which

\* Titus, i. 5, seems to imply that the churches in Crete had the kind of church existence referred to in the text. There was some-

relates to the connection between church and state. In the thirty-ninth article they allow princes and magistrates to "suppress and root out by their authority all false ministries, voluntary religions, and counterfeit worship of God;" and even to "enforce all their subjects, whether ecclesiastical or civil, to do their duties to God and men." It is singular to find this so long maintained by the early Independents; more especially as it is so much at variance with their other opinions, and as they had suffered so much in consequence of it in every period of their history, and even at the very moment when the confession was written.

Although, therefore, there is much in this confession to admire as an exposition of some of the leading principles of Independency, there is abundant proof that much had yet to be discovered. It was not for such men as Ainsworth even, to see the whole truth at once. Educated and trained in erroneous principles, it required time and much collision of mind with mind to arrive at those simple but harmonizing views which the New Testament affords respecting the basis of Christian fellowship and organization. It is with these laws as with those of nature; the most comprehensive and simple are not to be reached at one bound, but by a series of approximations; and where long-standing prejudices intervene, as in the case of the former, the process may be expected to be of longer duration. In this early period, too, there were many practical rules, which had not been determined; rules which although little more than details

thing "wanting," but not church existence. If so, must not the sacraments have been administered by persons appointed to do so for the time being?

in relation to the general question of Independent polity, were of great importance to the orderly and peaceable management of a Christian church. In the history of the apostolic churches we find many troubles arising from a want of actual experience in reference to these matters, and the same kind of trouble arose from time to time in those churches which were the first to return to an apostolic simplicity. In the latter examples these evils were increased by the attempts of enemies to stir up strife where it did not already exist, and to increase and exaggerate it where it did.

- The church at Amsterdam was not long at peace, in consequence of various causes. In an excess of charity some parties had been admitted to fellowship who proved to have been unworthy of it, and their exclusion afterwards, gave occasion to animosity and debate. Encouraged by the very weakness of the church which had exercised discipline upon them according to the laws of the New Testament, and favoured by the prelatical party who frowned upon the new principles of church organization and watched for the halting of such as advocated them, they made the most vituperative and mendacious attacks upon both the ministers and members. Had not the pastor and his colleagues publicly exposed the false statements of their libellers, the entire cause would have been irretrievably damaged. As it was, the able defences of Johnson and Ainsworth rebutted the various charges advanced, and thereby promoted the cause of truth.

To enter into minute particulars respecting such matters as these is unnecessary. Suffice it to say that the commencement of division originated with the relatives of Johnson, who were averse to his marriage

with a certain widow: while the episcopalian party made this marriage a reason for maligning the whole church, because it had not been celebrated at their altar; the father and brother of Francis Johnson, for private reasons, kept alive a contention on the subject, which ended, after four or five years' strife, in the expulsion of both from the church. Ainsworth not only took the side of Francis Johnson in this affair, but wrote in defence of his friend—a circumstance sufficient in itself to show that the opposition excited was both uncharitable and vain. Robinson, also, speaks of George Johnson, the brother, as a person quite unworthy of credit, and “a disgraceful libeller,” most justly “cast out of our church.” At the same time, feeling that such an uncommon state of things in reference to the church might be unfairly urged as an argument against the polity of the church in which he officiated, he adds, “It is to us a just cause of humiliation all the days of our lives, that we have given and do give, by our differences, such advantages to them which seek occasion against us to blaspheme the truth: though this may be a just judgment of God upon others which seek offences, that seeking they may find them to the hardening of their hearts in evil. But let men turn their eyes which way soever they will, they shall see the same scandals. Look to the first and best churches planted by the apostles themselves, and behold dissensions, scandal, strife, biting one of another.”\*

While these matters were dividing the church from within, various parties were from time to time busied in attacking the system of church polity which had been

\* Robinson's *Justification*, 1610. p. 55.



adopted. Henry Jacob, a man of whom we shall hear more presently, signalized himself by publishing a work expressly against the principles of the Brownists, and in defence of those of the church of England. Not very long after this period he became a convert to the views which he now sought to oppose, probably through the very writings which his own opposition called forth. Jacob's work was printed at Middleburgh, in 1599, and was entitled "A defence of the Churches and Ministry of England. Written in two Treatises, against the reasons and objections of Mr. Francis Johnson, and others of the separation commonly called Brownists." The next year Johnson replied to this work in an admirable, and, as it would appear, convincing manner.\* The following extracts from this reply are still worthy of being perused and studied as an admirable compendium of scriptural truths in relation to the "false doctrine of the Church of England and the defenders thereof."

1. "'That though the open, notorious, obstinate offenders be partakers of the sacraments, yet neither the sacraments nor the people that join with them are defiled thereby.'—Which doctrine is contrary to the truth of God in these scriptures:—1 Cor. x. 17; Hag. ii. 14, 15; 1 Cor. v. 6; x. 28; 2 Cor. vi. 14—18; Gal. v. 9; Matt. xviii. 8, 9. 15—19, etc.

2. "'That the planting or reforming of Christ's church must tarry for the civil magistrate, and may not otherwise be brought in by the word and Spirit of God in the testimony of His servants, except they have authority from earthly princes.'—Which doctrine is against the kingly power of Christ, and these scrip-

\* An Answer to Master H. Jacob, his Defence, &c., 4to. 1600.

tures :—Matt. xxviii. 18—20; Acts, iii. 23; 1 Cor. i. 27; 1 Cor. xiv. 27, with 1 Thess. iv. 8; Phil. ii. 6—12; 1 Tim. vi. 13—15; Rev. i. 5; xii. 11; xiv. 12; xvii. 14; xix. 16; xx. 4.

3. “ ‘That the true visible Church of Christ is not a separated company of righteous men and women, from the idolaters, and open wicked of the world; but may consist of all sorts of people, good and bad.’—Which doctrine is contrary to the pattern of Christ’s church throughout all the scriptures :—Gen. iv. 26, with vi. 2; Exod. iv. 22, 23, etc.; Matt. iii. 10—12; Acts, ii. 40—42; xix. 9; Rom. xii. 1—8; 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18; 1 Pet. ii. 9, 10, etc.

4. “To maintain this error of their confused order and mixture of all sorts of persons together, they pervert the parable of the tares, Matt. xiii. 24; teaching, ‘That all are the church, and that they may be retained, and communicated withal, in the church,’ which doctrine is against the truth of the scriptures; yea, against our Saviour’s own interpretation in the 38th verse, who teacheth that by ‘the field’ is meant ‘the world,’ in which his church is militant here on earth. And as herein is the good seed, the righteous, the children of the kingdom,—who, as they are often espied in this life by the righteous servants of God, and being discovered, are here cast out of the church in the name and by the power of Jesus Christ, so shall they, in that great day, be perfectly severed from the godly by the ‘angels:’ howsoever here, in the mean time making profession of the truth, and having a show of godliness, they be suffered to grow together with the good seed, and be with the upright of heart reputed members of the church on earth. Note, also, that the church, because it is the temple, house, and

kingdom of God on earth, wherein he dwelleth by his spirit, and ruleth by the sceptre of his word, as also 'the gate of heaven,' through which he bringeth us into his kingdom of glory after this life, is therefore by Christ in this place called 'the kingdom of heaven,' though yet it be here in the kingdom of this world:—Matt. xiii. 19, 24, 37, 38, 41, 43, 52, compared with Gen. xxviii. 17; 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17; 2 Cor. vi. 16, 18; Eph. ii. 21, 22; Matt. viii. 12; xvi. 18, 19, 28; xxi. 43; xxii. 12, 14, etc. And, further, if Christ's meaning were that men should here still bear and partake with the known wicked and profane, notwithstanding that their estate; then by this it would follow that there should neither be use of excommunication in the church, nor punishment of malefactors in the commonwealth; which could not but be the destruction of both, and is directly contrary to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles in other scriptures; as, namely, in Matt. xxviii. 17, 18; xxvi. 52; Rom. xiii. 4; 1 Cor. v.; 1 Tim. i. 20. Finally, this their doctrine aforesaid, is against the express commandment of God, the heavenly order of Christ in his Church, and the continual practice of the prophets, apostles, and faithful in all ages: for which see these scriptures, Gen. xvii. 14; xix. 12—16; Lev. xviii. 29, 30; xx. 22—26, etc.; Matt. xviii. 8, 9, 15—18; Acts, ii. 40, 41, 47, etc.

5. "That the people may tolerate and join with open iniquity in the church, until by the magistrate it be redressed."—Which doctrine is contrary to these scriptures, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; Matt. xxviii. 20; Acts. ii. 40; iii. 23; iv. 19; ix. 26; xix. 9; 1 Tim. v. 22; Deut. v. 32; xii. 32.

6. "That the gift of interpretation and application

of the scriptures are a sufficient and lawful calling to the ministry, etc.'—Which doctrine is both false and anabaptistical; contrary to the scriptures, Heb. v. 4; Rom. xii. 6—8; Lev. xxii. 25; Acts, i. 20, 26; xiii. 2, 3; xiv. 23.

7. "'That the church may yield obedience unto other laws, canons, traditions, officers, and offices, than God hath prescribed in his covenant.'—Which doctrine is contrary to Gen. xlix. 10; Matt. vi. 24; John, x. 4, 5; Rev. xiv. 4, etc.

8. "'That the church may read other men's words upon a book, and offer them to God as their own prayers and sacrifices in the public assemblies.'—Which doctrine is contrary to the scriptures, Isa. xxix. 13, 14; Rom. viii. 26; 1 Cor. xiv. 15; Matt. vi. 6, 9; xv. 9; Mark, vii. 7, etc.

9. "'That it is lawful to join with the ministry of dumb and idol priests, and to receive the sacraments at their hands.'—Which doctrine is contrary to Matt. xv. 14; vii. 15; xxiv. 24, 25, etc.; 1 Tim. iii. 2; vi. 5, etc.

10. "'That it is lawful for a minister of Christ to cease preaching, and forsake his flock, at the commandment of the lord bishops'—which doctrine is contrary to 1 Cor. ix. 16; Isai. lxii. i. 6, 7; Jer. xlviii. 10; Zech. xi. 17; John x. 2—13; Acts iv. 18—20; v. 29; Amos vii. 12—15; 2 Tim. iv. 2.

11. "'That the church of Christ hath not always power to bind and loose, to receive in, and cast out, by the keys of his kingdom.'—Which doctrine is contrary to Math. xviii. 17, 18; Psal. cxlix. 9; 1 Cor. v. 4, 5, 12; Num. v. 2, 3.

12. "'That it is lawful for the people of God to hear notorious false prophets in the ministry.'—

Which doctrine is contrary to Deut. xviii. 15 ; Matt. xvii. 5 ; vii. 15 ; 2 John 10, 11 ; 1 Cor. x. 18 ; Gal. i. 8, 9 ; Rev. x. iv. 9 ; ii. xviii. 4 ; John x. 5.

13. " ' That it is the church and house of God, the body and kingdom of Christ, where he reigneth not by his own ordinances and officers ; but the highest ecclesiastical authority is in the hands of strange lords and anti-christian prelates ; who also govern by Romish canons, and not according to the laws of Christ's Testament.'—Which doctrine and practice are condemned by Luke xix. 14—27 ; John xv. 14 ; Rom. vi. 16 ; Luke xxii. 25, 26 ; 1 Pet. v. 3 ; 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4, 8 ; John iii. 35, 36 ; Rev. ix. 3 ; xiv. 9—11 ; xix. 14, 15, 19.

14. " ' That there may be a prescript liturgy and set form of service in the church, framed by man.'—Which doctrine is contrary to Deut. v. 8 ; Isai. xxix. 13, 14 ; Matt. xv. 9 ; Mark vii. 6, 7 ; Gal. iii. 15 ; John iv. 24 ; Rom. viii. 26, 27 ; Eph. iv. 7, 8 ; Col. ii. 23.

15. " ' That an anti-christian prelate, notwithstanding his dignity, (as it is called) spiritual, may be a civil magistrate, and obeyed of the people as their lawful governor.'—Which doctrine is contrary to Rom. xiii. 1, etc. ; Matt. xx. 25, 26. ; Mark x. 42, 43 ; Luke xxii. 25, 26 ; Rev. xiv. 9—11 ; xvii. 14, 16, 18.

16. " ' That men may give the titles of Christ Jesus to these sons of men, his mortal enemies, to call them their archbishops, lord bishops, fathers, lords, etc.'—Which doctrine is contrary to 1 Pet. v. 3, 4, with ii. 25 ; Matt. xxiii. 8—10 ; Isai. xlii. 8 ; xlviii. 11. ; Prov. xvii. 15 ; xxiv. 24 ; Isai. v. 20 ; 2 Cor. vi. 14—17.

17. " ' That it is lawful for a minister of Christ to be maintained in his ministry by Jewish and popish

tithes, Christmas offerings, etc.'—Which doctrine is contrary to Heb. vii. 12; 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; Prov. xxvii. 26, 27; Phil. iv. 10, 18; Rom. xv. 27; Gal. vi. 6.

In this summary of objections to the constitution and practice of the church of England, Johnson suited himself not only to the candid enquirer after truth in general, but particularly to his present opponent. Jacob was a man of independent thought, and very conscientious. He had written in defence of the church of England, because he believed it to be in the main rightly constituted; and had he regarded the matter otherwise, he would have expressed himself as frankly. There is reason to believe that the method adopted by Johnson in the reply now under consideration, materially tended to the production of that change in Jacob's sentiments, the abundant proofs of which we shall notice presently.

While Jacob was opposing the Amsterdam church on one side, others were engaged in the same work on another. Francis Junius, "Divinity Reader at Leyden," was one of them. Having received a copy of the "confession" referred to some pages back, Junius thought it needful to write "to the brethren of the English church," in reply to it. Decrying liberty of private judgment, and recommending quietness on the part of the congregational church, he proceeds to argue against separation from the English church in such a manner as to call forth a reply from the exiles, which again led to further discussion on the part of Junius. Thus a controversy was opened which lasted for some time. The settlers had much the best of the argument, and defended their conduct in a spirited manner. Our limited

space forbids our entering into further particulars. The following extract, however, serves to show how willing the separatists were to have their principles discussed, and how amply they could justify their own proceedings.

“If you write again, we do humbly and earnestly entreat, if any where we have erred in our faith and cause, that you vouchsafe to show it us by the light of God’s word. Otherwise it will be suspected, seeing you bestow so much pains in discussing these things which concern the manner, and not the matter itself, that either you do dissemble your judgment, whatsoever it be, or that in very deed you are of the same mind with us; especially seeing now you have written, that you do not entertain any ‘prejudice at all’ to our cause, and have spoken this ‘religiously before the Lord.’ Pity, we pray you, our church here exiled, every where reproached, eaten up, in a manner, with deep poverty, despised and afflicted well near of all; against which satan hath now a long time attempted all utmost extremities. Pity them from whom we have departed; who, under pretence of the gospel, continue still in anti-christian defection, and do so stiffly hold, and eagerly maintain it as there is scarce any among them that dare so much as hiss against it. Pity these churches, among whom we sojourn, in which, whether we look at the public prayers, or the administration of the sacraments, or the execution of discipline, there be sundry tares, if they may be called tares; or rather, corruptions, and those also not of small moment; at which, as is reported, the anabaptists and others, not a few, that live here do stumble; of which also we have heretofore conferred friendly with the ministers of these churches, men indeed learned, and

our brethren beloved, but hitherto we do not accord therein, yet hope for better consent hereafter, by the blessing of God, and through the help of you and other godly men. Finally, pity the whole church of Christ, which verily it is not meet nor expedient, neither indeed ought, among so many and grievous wounds of her's universally inflicted, to be further galled with this particular wound, that you should not take it in good part to have, by us, the true faith of Christ published, and the remnants of anti-christ's apostacy discovered."\*

We now turn from these discussions abroad, to those events which caused the exiles to revert with hopeful feelings to the land from which they had been driven forth. Tidings respecting their brethren in London and elsewhere, were always grateful to them in their banishment ; and the comparative ease which the puritans and others enjoyed during the latter years of Elizabeth's reign, led them to hope that a better order of things might ensue so soon as her successor might ascend the British throne. In the anticipation of these things, some of the exiles returned to England, and waited breathlessly for the long expected period of liberty and peace. How grievously they were disappointed we proceed to show in another chapter.

\* For further particulars respecting this controversy see Hanbury, ii chap. viii.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE INDEPENDENTS AND JAMES THE FIRST.

ON the death of Queen Elizabeth, in 1603, it was hoped by the Reformers generally, that a new line of policy would be adopted in relation to ecclesiastical affairs in England. Her Majesty's reign, although eminently prosperous in many respects, had been one of great hardship for the puritans and Brownists; and as many reports had been circulated respecting the presbyterian leanings of James, it was confidently believed that his accession to the throne would be the introduction of a new era. In the general assembly of Scotland, in 1590, he had pronounced the church of that country to be perfect, while that of England was nothing better than popish. "Their service," he said, "is an ill-mumbled mass in English; they want nothing of the mass but the liftings." And, as if to prove that he was sincere, he added, "I charge you, my good people, ministers, elders, nobles, gentlemen, and barons, to stand to your purity; and I, forsooth, as long as I brook my life and crown, shall maintain the same against all deadly." This speech was received with universal acclamation by the presbyterians, and the praises of James were celebrated in England almost as widely as in Scotland. Even Whitgift, and the church party entertained the gravest apprehensions respecting the new king. They re-

ferred to his accession under the metaphor a *Scotch mist*, and anticipated with dread the alterations which would be made in the government and liturgy of the church. The real character of the monarch had, in fact, been misunderstood. It was scarcely suspected that he could become so apostate to all his avowed convictions, as he afterwards proved to be. It was not imagined even, that he who had so often been cowed and brow-beaten by the presbyterian clergy in Scotland, \* and whose flesh gave signs of fear at the sight of a drawn sword, could play the tyrant in another country, when surrounded by other circumstances. Such, however, was the case. The pedantic and fearful monarch found a clergy made to hand, in England. They suited him in every respect. Their adulation, which was almost idolatrous, told upon his principles much more effectually than any argumentation. The contrast between truthful, honest-spoken presbyterians and these sycophant bishops, determined him at once to abide by his adage

\* Mr. Robert Bruce said before his face that "God would raise more Bothwells against him than one, gif he did not revenge God's quarrel against the papists, before his own particular." Andrew Melville, on a certain occasion, took the king by the sleeve, called him "God's sillie vassal," and then addressed him in a strain "the most singular in point of freedom that ever saluted royal ears." Amongst other things, he said, "Therefore, sir, as divers times before I have told you, so now again I must tell you, there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland. There is king James, the head of this commonwealth, and there is Jesus Christ, the king of the church, whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member. We will yield unto you your place, and give you all due obedience; but again I say, you are not the head of the church, you cannot give us that eternal life which we seek for ever in this world, and you cannot deprive us of it."—*M'Crie's Life of Melville*, i. 391.

of, 'No bishop, no king;' and so things remained, eventually, as they were, or rather waxed worse and worse.

Immediately upon James's accession, all parties sought to interest him in their favour. Petitions and addresses without end poured in upon him before he arrived to take possession of his kingdom. At every stage of his march he found himself pressed by suitors in form, each of whom had something of the gravest importance to bring to his majesty's notice. It was plain that ecclesiastical affairs had gone wrong hitherto, and James was solicited to set them right again, with little sagacity, however, in the solicitation.

While the puritans presented their "millenary" petition to his majesty, signed, as they said, by a thousand names,—a great number in that day; the Brownists or Independents did not forget their duty. The exiles addressed themselves to the task of enlightening the successor of their persecutor, respecting their particular views, which they did under the following heads:

1. "That Christ the Lord hath by his last testament given to his church, and set therein, sufficient ordinary offices, with the manner of calling or entrance, works and maintenance, for the administration of his holy things, and for the sufficient ordinary instruction, guidance, and service of his church, to the end of the world.

2. "That every particular church hath like and full interest and power to enjoy and practise all the ordinances of Christ, given by him to his church, to be observed therein perpetually.

3. "That every true visible church is a company of people called and separated from the world by the

word of God, and joined together by voluntary profession of the faith of Christ, in the fellowship of the gospel.

4. "That discreet, faithful, and able men (though not yet in office of ministry) may be appointed to preach the gospel and whole truth of God ; that men, being first brought to knowledge, and converted to the Lord, may be then joined together in holy communion with Christ our head, and one with another.

5. "That being thus joined, every church hath power in Christ, to choose and take unto themselves meet and sufficient persons into the offices and functions of pastors, teachers, elders, deacons, and helpers, as those which Christ hath appointed in his testament, for the feeding, governing, serving, and building up of his church.

6. "That the ministers aforesaid being lawfully called by the church where they are to minister, ought to continue in their functions according to God's ordinance, and carefully to feed the flock of Christ committed unto them ; being not enjoined or suffered to bear civil offices withal, neither burdened with the execution of civil affairs, as the celebration of marriages, burying the dead, &c. ; which things belong to those as well without as within the church.

7. "That the due maintenance of the officers aforesaid should be of the free and voluntary contributions of the church ; that, according to Christ's ordinance, they which preach the gospel may live of the gospel, and not by popish lordships and livings, or Jewish tithes and offerings. And that—

8. "Therefore the lands and other like revenues of the prelates and clergy yet remaining (being still also

baits to allure the jesuits and seminaries into the land, and incitements unto them to plot and prosecute their wonted evil courses in hope to enjoy them in time to come) may now by your highness be taken away and converted to better use, as those of the abbeyes and nunneries have been heretofore by your majesty's worthy predecessors, to the honour of God, and great good of the realm.

9. "That all particular churches ought to be so constituted, as, having their own peculiar officers, the whole body of every church may meet together in one place, and jointly perform their duties to God, and one towards another.

10. "And that the censures of admonition and excommunication be in due manner executed for sin convicted and obstinately stood in. This power to be also in the body of the church whereof the parties so offending and persisting are members.

11. "That the church be not governed by popish canons, courts, classes, customs, or any human inventions, but by the laws and rules which Christ hath appointed in his testament. That no apocryphal writings, but only the canonical scriptures, be used in the church. And that the Lord be worshipped and called upon in spirit and in truth, according to that form of prayer given by the Lord Jesus, Matt. vi., and after the liturgy of his own testament; not by any other framed or imposed by men, much less by one translated from the popish liturgy, as the book of common prayer."

In the original document, which consisted of forty large pages, all these propositions are expanded and supported in a most lucid and admirable manner.

Whether the king ever took the trouble to read the whole has not been ascertained.

As a specimen of the ability with which these propositions were supported, we adduce the particular reasons in "declaration and proof" of the first, in the words of the document itself, and with all the scripture references.

1. "Because the very office of Christ's mediation, to be the eternal Prophet, Priest, and King of the church, and his faithful dispensation thereof, importeth, requireth, and assureth this of him. Heb. iii. 1—3.; x. 21; xii. 24—28; John xiv. 6; xv. 15, 16; with Acts i. 3.

2. "Because otherwise it would follow, either that Christ hath not in his Testament so provided (the thing being not needful, or Himself not careful, faithful, or sufficient, so to give and appoint), or that men may abrogate his Testament, or super-ordain thereunto: which is contrary to the scriptures aforesaid, compared with Gal. iii. 15.

3. "Else, Moses, being but a servant, was more faithful in the house of God, than Christ the Son. contrary to Heb. iii. 1—6, with Exod. xxxix. 42, 43.

4. "Because the Scripture doth teach that Christ hath given to his church, and set in it, certain and distinct offices, gifts, and works, for his ministry, and building up of his church, until we all meet in the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, etc. Eph. iv. 11—13; 1 Cor. xii. 4—6, 28, 29; with Rom. xii. 7, 8; 1 Tim. chs. iii. and v. 3, 9, 17; vi. 13, 14.

5. "Else, it should be in the power of man to add or take any members to and from the body of

Christ; for the church is his body, and the officers the members thereof: which were contrary to 1 Cor. xii. 18, 27, 28, with Rom. xii. 4—8.

7. "Else there might be church-offices and functions from the earth; and not from heaven only, as Christ hath taught, and even the Pharisees themselves acknowledged. Matt. xxi. 25; John i. 21—27; Heb. v. 4.

8. "Else, the church either is not the kingdom and house of the Lord, or he hath not had that sovereignty and care that all wise princes and householders have for their kingdoms and houses, to have them ordered by officers and ordinances appointed by themselves, and by others: contrary to Acts x. 3; with 1 Tim. iii. 15; vi. 14, 15; Heb. iii. 5, 6; xii. 28.

9. "How else did the apostle Paul, who was not with the other apostles, but did afterward receive the gospel by revelation from Christ; how else did he plant the churches that were gathered by him, in the same way, offices, and ordinances, that the other apostles did; if the Lord himself have not so ordained, or if these ordinances were not part of the gospel which he received? For which see and compare his epistles, and Acts, with the rest.

10. "Else, we could not of faith, either receive, use, or join unto the offices and administration of holy things in the church: because true faith is, and must be, grounded in the Word of God. Rom. x. 17; xiv. 23; Heb. xi. 6; John ii. 22."

Besides the above, which was the third address\* to

\* The earliest application to James was entitled "The humble petition of certain poor Christians, your Majesty's loyal subjects;"

the monarch emanating from the Independent party, and subscribed as the representative petition of the exiles abroad and their brethren at home, was one which merits special attention. We refer to a publication by Henry Jacob, dedicated to the king, and setting forth the views which he had recently acquired, mainly through the instrumentality of Francis Johnson. It was entitled, "Reasons taken out of God's word and the best human testimonies: proving a necessity of reforming our churches in England." \* This treatise proposed to establish four propositions, which in substance are as follows:—First, that it is necessary to reform the churches of England; second, that for the space of two hundred years after Christ, there were no diocesan churches, but only such as were congregational and capable of meeting in one place; thirdly, that the Scriptures set forth a form of church government of an ordinary character, distinct from that of apostles and inspired men; and fourthly, that this form of church government is of perpetual obligation, and may not be exchanged for another.

In defending these positions, Jacob relies wholly upon the exclusive authority of the Scriptures—the "written word being the sole warrant for all things ecclesiastical."

the second, "The humble supplication of sundry your majesty's faithful subjects, who have now a long time been constrained either to live as exiles abroad, or to endure other grievous persecutions at home, for bearing witness to the truth of Christ against the corruptions of Antichrist yet remaining."

\* Hanbury, i. 220, note e, mentions some previous publications of Jacob's, in which he complains of the bitterness and rage of Bishop Bilson against him.



In opposition to the common notions entertained by churchmen and others, he argues for the completeness of every local or congregational church for all purposes of self-government and management. "It is to be noticed," he says, "that in the estimation of men, a visible church (that is, which is endued with power of spiritual outward government) is of divers forms and natures. Nevertheless, in truth and in very deed, Christ hath ordained for us only one kind of a visible church in his word, and this only ought to be allowed and believed to be a true church by all Christians, for who is it that can or ever could make any society of people to be a visible church, but Christ only? Some men esteem the universal number of professed Christians in the world to be one visible church, calling it the catholic or universal visible church. And the catholics, taking hold thereof, do conclude that likewise there is and ought to be one catholic and universal government ecclesiastical, unto which all other churches, and their governments must be subordinate. But in God's word there is no such visible church nor government any where to be found. This is merely devised by the wit and will of men. Again, men esteem a whole nation professing the gospel to be one visible church, and they call it a *national* church, likewise a province a *provincial* church, and a diocese a *diocesan* church. But none of these likewise can be found in the whole New Testament of Christ. Only a *particular ordinary constant congregation* of Christians in Christ's testament, is appointed and reckoned to be a visible church. And therefore so standeth the case now here with us in England also, and so we ought to esteem it."

The following conclusions are deduced from the general reasonings employed:—1. That every particular ordinary congregation of faithful people is a true and proper visible church. 2. That every such congregation is endued with power from Christ to govern itself ecclesiastically or spiritually. 3. That every true and proper visible church is but one constant and ordinary congregation of faithful men only.\*

In every period, congregational principles have been thought more favourable to popular power than to monarchical rule and government. Mr. Jacobs puts this matter in a clear and striking light, and successfully vindicates his views from all false charges of this nature, in the following remarks, which at that period were somewhat original in their character:—

“First,” he says, “we absolutely deny that any manner of ecclesiastical government requireth the civil government to become conformed to it. This is a most false conceit. The bounds of either government are distinct and clearly severed the one from the other, albeit each doth aid and succour the other. . . . But they think this manner of government will become tumultuous and troublesome in the state, and so it will prove hurtful to the prince. I would demand, why think they that the church government (as we desire it) will be troublesome and tumultuous? They will answer, because we require of necessity that elections of ministers, and excommunications, etc., must be *popular*, which cannot but bring with them commonly tumult, and much trouble, if not confusion and peril to many. Whereupon I reply, that this were very true indeed (viz. much trouble and tumult would

\* Reasons, etc., 4.

commonly follow, and perhaps peril to divers), if we desired or sought for popular elections of *diocesan bishops*. Such as we read of and find to have been used in many places under Christian princes, from three hundred years after Christ hitherward for a long time. As, for example, at Antioch, Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople, etc. In these and other cities very great stirs, tumults, and confusions, among the people, have risen indeed not seldom times, even in and about such their elections. The ecclesiastical histories are full of examples to this purpose. But such running together of a whole city or diocese, such voice-giving of such multitudes of people, we desire not, neither do we in any way allow it. It was a corrupt remainder indeed of the people's ancient free voice-giving to the election of their *parishional pastors* or *bishops*. For such all ordinary bishops and pastors were primitively in the apostles' days, and such everywhere they were left by them. Every ordinary bishop, then (I say), was only of a parish (as the ancients call it), that is, of one particular congregation only, and no greater. And so their elections were accomplished by the free consent and voice-giving only of the people of each of these particular ordinary congregations, or parishes. Now it is true, indeed, we acknowledge, we allow, and do desire such *elections* and excommunications by the people. Neither is this to be reckoned any *popularity*, which can be either prejudicious to princes, or tumultuous in itself. No, it cannot be an inconvenient order, but most reasonable for any place or people in the world. Namely, seeing we do expressly hold this assertion no otherwise (and we heartily pray that it may be noted), but as it is grounded on four circumstances:—1. In regard that it is (as we are well

assured) a divine order and ordinance instituted for each church by Christ and his apostles. 2. Considering that we allow the people's consent and voice-giving in elections, excommunications, etc., to be done only by the Christian people of one parish, that is, of one particular ordinary congregation only, and by no greater nor larger number of people by any means. 3. Considering that in the manner hereof we hold this only to be necessary and ordinary, that the ecclesiastical guides there (apart from the people), do first by themselves prepare and determine the whole matter, in such sort that the people may not need to do aught afterward, but only consent with them, and freely signify their consent in it. 4. If anywhere it should fall out that this people thus guided, and being so few, will yet presume to be in their church elections, etc., unruly and violent, then the prince's next dwelling *officers of justice* may and ought to make them keep peace and quietness."

While these petitions and remonstrances were being prepared and presented, James was hastening on his own secret plans for the re-establishment of the Anglican church in all its former authority, and with increased intolerance towards all dissenters. For a short time he dissimulated, as he only knew how to dissimulate; but ere long it was evident enough how he intended to act. In consequence of the desire expressed by so many parties that he would confer with them in respect to their ecclesiastical opinions, giving them a fair hearing, and deciding upon their merits accordingly, he issued a proclamation, dated Oct. 24, 1603, which appointed a conference in his presence between the representatives of the church and of the puritans. The same proclamation, however,

affirmed, that the constitution and doctrine of the English church were scriptural and primitive, while its actual condition at that time reflected great credit on those by whom its affairs had been administered. The puritans were censured, and divers threats were held out respecting the punishment of such as should be guilty of "contemptuous behaviour to any authority."

There could be little hope of a conference appointed by such a proclamation as this; and well might Whitgift express his satisfaction at the pleasing turn which "the Solomon of the age"—the royal craftsman—had given to the current of affairs. The bishops had played their part well, and were amply rewarded for their sycophancy. They had only to leave the matter in the hands of his majesty, and their interests would be safe!

On the 14th, 16th, and 18th of January, 1604, the conference was held at Hampton Court. There were present eighteen churchmen, most of them dignitaries of the church, and four puritans. As for the independents, they were either too insignificant or too obstinate to be summoned. We shall not weary our readers with the details of this mock solemnity. It was little more than a royal entertainment, got up for the purpose of displaying the egregious vanity of the monarch, at the expense of the puritans. This conference—which really terminated on the second day—was closed by the following remark to his attendants respecting the nonconformists:—"If this be all that they have to say, I shall make them conform themselves, or I will harry them out of this land, or else do worse." And this ecclesiastical Nimrod was as good as his word. Whitgift was so much surprised into delight with James's behaviour as to

declare, "that undoubtedly his majesty spake by the special assistance of God's spirit;" and Bancroft "upon his knee protested that his heart melted within him with joy, and made haste to acknowledge unto Almighty God the singular mercy we have received at his hands, in giving us such a king, as since Christ's time, the like, he thought, had not been."\*

Indeed, this conference was one of the most disgraceful proceedings ever conducted in the name of impartiality, and for the settlement of national religious differences. Sir John Harrington, although greatly opposed to the puritans, gives this account of it in a letter to his wife:—"The bishops came to the king about the petition of the puritans. I was by, and heard much discourse. The king talked much Latin, and disputed with Dr. Reynolds at Hampton; but he rather used upbraidings than arguments, and told the petitioners that they wanted to strip Christ again, and bid them away with their snivellings: moreover, he wished those who would take away the surplice might want linen for their own breech. The bishops seemed much pleased, and said his majesty spoke by the power of inspiration. I wist not what they meant, but the spirit was rather foul-mouthed. There was much discourse about the ring in marriage and the cross in baptism; but, if I guess right, the petitioners against one cross will find another."† And Mr. Hallam observes, "In the accounts that we read of this meeting, we are alternately struck with wonder at the indecent and partial behaviour of the king, and at the abject baseness of the bishops, mixed,

\* Barlow's Account of the Hampton Court Conference in the Phoenix, i. 174.

† Nugæ Antiquæ, i. 181.

according to the custom of servile natures, with insolence towards their opponents. It was easy for a monarch and eighteen churchmen to claim the victory, be the merits of the dispute what they might, over abashed and intimidated adversaries."\* Instead of being conciliated, the puritans and nonconformists were more aggrieved than ever, and the breach between them and the Establishment was greatly widened. The vain and unprincipled monarch lost the only opportunity which presented itself of healing the religious divisions of the nation, and by his arbitrary conduct on this and future occasions provoked the terrible retribution which afterwards fell on his unhappy family.

Soon after the Hampton Court Conference a proclamation was issued which had for its object an uniformity in the use of the Book of Common Prayer, and which stated the determination of the king to admit of no "innovation in things once settled by mature determination;" and in the same month (March 19th, 1603—4), in his speech in parliament, he spoke of the puritans and nonconformists as "being ever discontented with the present government, impatient to suffer any superiority, and insufferable in any well-governed commonwealth." In the same parliament, the book of canons, containing one hundred and forty-one articles, was presented to the House of Commons. The principal object of these canons was to suppress puritanism of all kinds. Although not confirmed by parliament, they were acted upon ecclesiastically, and the spirit of them animated more or less all the clergy of the Establishment, who

\* Constitutional Hist. i. 404.

were required to receive them on their oath. The nature of these canons is such as to evince at once the intolerance and bigotry of the church that adopted them. The following canons especially bore hard upon the independents of that day:—

“Whosoever shall hereafter affirm that the Church of England, by law established under the king’s majesty, is not a true and apostolical church, teaching and maintaining the doctrine of the apostles, let him be excommunicated *ipso facto*,\* and not restored, but only by the archbishop, after his repentance and public revocation of this his wicked error.”†

“Whosoever shall hereafter separate themselves from the communion of saints, as it is approved by the apostles’ rules in the Church of England, and combine themselves together in a new brotherhood, accounting the Christians who are conformable to the doctrines, government, rites, and ceremonies of the Church of England to be profane, and unmeet for them to join with in Christian profession; let them be excommunicated *ipso facto*, etc.”‡

But most of the remaining canons were framed in the same spirit and were equally effective instruments of ecclesiastical despotism.

In consequence of these proceedings, both puritans and independents were persecuted anew and with fresh zest. Bancroft proved a worthy successor of Whitgift,§ and hunted down his prey with great perseverance, seconded in his efforts by the bishops and

\* By the fact itself.

† Canon iii.

‡ Canon ix.

§ Whitgift died in 1603—4.



leading clergy.\* They now saw themselves secure in their various offices, and employed their leisure in retaliating upon those who had given them what they considered so much unnecessary cause for anxiety. The separatists were now compelled to submit to the new decrees, or to leave the country, if they wished to escape a worse fate. Many were imprisoned, and died the victims of oppression and hate, broken in heart, and wasted by penury and solitude. Such as had returned from exile were compelled once more to "banish themselves," taking many others with them.

Before they left, they used all possible means for the purpose of inducing an alteration in the line of policy adopted by the king and his subservients. But it was in vain. The minds of the ruling party in the state were made up. The monarch had given sufficient indications of the disposition which he cherished towards the nonconforming party, and the archbishop was fully bent upon carrying out practically the determination of the royal will—to "harry them out of the land."

\* Dr. Rudd, bishop of St. David's, was an exception to the rule. See his speech in behalf of moderation in *Pierce's Vindication*, p. 158—163.

## CHAPTER VII.

### JOHN ROBINSON, THE FATHER OF THE MODERN INDEPENDENTS.

AMONGST those who left the country, in consequence of the arbitrary measures of James the First, was one whose name and memory are still cherished with peculiar veneration. His genius, character, learning, and prudence, were such as to give him great influence in his own day; and in every after period he has been regarded as the Father of the Modern Independents. Our history would be incomplete if we did not furnish some particulars respecting the life, and character, and writings, of this truly eminent man.

John Robinson was born in 1575. Little is known of his early history. While his young days were passing fleetly by, important events were transpiring in his own country. While he was yet in his cradle, Drake was circumnavigating the globe. When he was eight years old, the proto-martyrs of Independency, Copping and Thacker, suffered in behalf of that cause of which he was afterwards to become the expounder and representative. The Spanish Armada was destroyed by the prowess of England when he was in his thirteenth year. At the age of eighteen, he came within the operation of the statute of Elizabeth, which compelled all persons to attend upon the public worship of the Church of England. While

Elizabeth was adding to her personal renown and that of her government, and heaping up wrath against a future day ;—while Leicester was wearying himself with the most fruitless of all enterprises ;—while Essex was signalising himself by his prowess, and bringing down upon himself the evil consequences of his mad ambition ;—while Burleigh was devoting himself to the service of the queen, his mistress, whom he too much identified with the nation ;—while Bacon, ever great and illustrious, was advancing step by step to the highest offices of state, and rolling away the clouds of a false logic from the fair face of nature ;—while Shakspeare, the poet of mankind, was throwing away his temporal reputation at a play-house, in order to make it lasting after death ;—while Raleigh was securing the favour of the queen by his gallantry, and the applause of the people by his liberal views, and introducing new articles of consumption and luxury into the country ;—while Whitgift was scouring the country with his bailiffs and constables, in order to discover Puritan disloyalty, Brownist treason, and any other supposed iniquity conceived in the name of religion ;—while all these illustrious personages were thus employed, Robinson was growing up to years of thought and responsible action, passing through the various stages of college life, discharging the duties of a clergyman in the Church of England, unlearning the errors in which he had been brought up, discovering the true doctrines of the gospel, and preparing himself for a noble career as a great leader, whose manly sufferings, able writings, and sage counsels, should not merely be confirmatory of the cause of Independency in England, but instrumental to the planting of the tree of liberty on other shores, and to

the laying broad and deep the foundation of a new republic. He did not, at the time, fill so much space in the public eye as some other men; but he was doing as great a work as any—acting the part of a silent but steady reformer, in matters of the highest moment—winning himself a name with posterity on the same page with that of Wyckliffe, Huss, Luther, Calvin, and Milton—and giving new breadth of outline to that church polity, which, as it was originally in apostolic times, so it shall be, ere long, the basis of fellowship and intercommunion among all the churches of Christ.

Robinson was educated at Cambridge; but no particulars respecting this period of his life have reached us. It is evident, from the nature of his writings afterwards, that he must have been a diligent student; since a person so actively engaged as we find him to have been, could not have acquired the scholarship and polish which he evinced in all his works, after he had entered upon the public services of the ministry.

On leaving Cambridge, he settled down as a beneficed clergyman in or near Yarmouth. While thus engaged, he was brought to the knowledge of the truth, and was led to appreciate those principles which were so much "spoken against." It is probable that he entered upon his clerical duties, as many others of that and after times have done, with little seriousness, or, at least, with a very imperfect knowledge of their vital importance in relation to the cause of Christ and of souls. It may be inferred, however, from his own statement, that he was possessed of a tender conscience; and was led to examine, with all candour and impartiality, the various publications which espoused the cause of evangelical truth and godliness.

It is also worthy of notice that, for many years before he avowed himself a separatist, he secretly favoured the principles of the Brownists, and such as adopted and improved upon their views. He was essentially a man of great prudence, and therefore unwilling to abandon the position in which he found himself, until he had thoroughly examined the new views which his own conscience approved. The secret of Robinson's consistency and influence in after life was in a great degree attributable to this habit of his mind. It could never be said of him that he was fickle, and easily moved by novelty either of opinion or practice. At the same time, he was as far as possible removed from the other extreme—that of obstinately resisting all change, however reasonable. He used, in fact, that liberty of private judgment which is the noblest privilege of every Christian, with a wise courage and a serious freedom. To part with such a privilege, nothing on earth could induce him. To exercise it rashly, or without sufficient deliberation, was equally far from his thoughts. Hence the delay which marked his determination to relinquish his connection with "the church as by law established;" hence also the stability which marked his career afterwards. Although it was a settled maxim of his, to preserve a mind open to new accessions of knowledge, as God might direct his people to a further insight into the meaning of his word, yet we find his progress ever onward, and certainly not fluctuating with every wind of doctrine.

Robinson's own words respecting this matter corroborate the statement we have made, and afford a clue to his whole character. "I do indeed confess," he writes, "to the glory of God and my own shame, that a long time before I entered this way I took some

taste of the truth in it, by some treatises published in justification of it, which, the Lord knoweth, were sweet as honey unto my mouth ; and the very principal thing which for a time quenched all further appetite in me, was the over-valuation which I made of the learning and holiness of these and the like persons ; blushing in myself to have a thought of pressing one hair-breadth before them in this thing, behind whom I knew myself to come so many miles in all other things ; yea, and even of late times, when I had entered into a more serious consideration of these things, and, according to the measure of grace received, 'searched the scriptures' whether they were so or not, and by searching found much light of truth ; yet was the same so dimmed and over-clouded with the contradictions of these men, and others of the like note, that had not the truth been 'in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones,' I had never broken those bonds of flesh and blood wherein I was so straitly tied, but had suffered the light of God to have been put out, in my own unthankful heart, by other men's darkness. This reverence every man stands bound to give to the graces of God in other men, that in his differences from them he be not suddenly nor easily persuaded ; but that being jealous of his own heart, he undertake the examination of things, and so proceed with fear and trembling ; and so, having tried 'all things, keep to that which is good.' So shall he neither wrong the graces of God in himself, nor in others. But on the other side, for a man so far to suffer his thoughts to be conjured into the circle of any mortal man's judgment as either to fear to 'try' what is offered to the contrary, in the balance of the sanctuary, or finding it to bear weight, to fear to give sentence on the Lord's

side, yea, though it be against the mighty,—this is to honour men above God, and to advance a throne above the throne of Christ, who is Lord and King for ever.” \*

Actuated by such motives as these, Robinson at length felt it his duty to leave the establishment. On so doing, he repaired to Norwich, somewhere about the year 1609, in order to associate with such as entertained religious convictions similar to his own. Here for a season he found a home amongst those with whom he could sympathise. Before this, in all probability, he had met a portion of his flock at Yarmouth in private houses, and had followed a more simple and scriptural method of conducting Divine worship and fellowship than that which the church of England prescribed; but he was too often disturbed by opponents in his own neighbourhood, and therefore took the step to which we have just adverted.

There were either at or shortly after this period, two churches formed on congregational principles in Norwich or its neighbourhood. Mr. Smyth was pastor of the one, and Mr. Richard Clyfton of the other. We shall hear more of these parties in a subsequent portion of our history. Robinson, it is thought, must have joined the church previous to this division. For a considerable period, he fulfilled the duties of a private member, and by his amiable temper and consistent demeanour secured the esteem of the whole community. This circumstance is sufficient in itself to show the character of the man. He was as ready to serve in one capacity as another, when duty required it;

\* A Justification of Separation from the Church of England. Against Mr. Richard Bernard, his invective, entitled ‘The Separatists’ Schism.’ By John Robinson, 4to. p. 48.

and by demeaning himself with all humility and consistency as a private member, he gave the best proof that he was not incapacitated to rule.\* Such was his conduct, that he was "worthily revered of all the city for the graces of God in him." †

For a long period, the persecution directed against the separatists had been felt most keenly; and it was determined, if possible, to leave the country, and escape into Holland. The first attempt was made in 1602, and a second in the spring of the following year. Both occurrences have been narrated in the following words :‡—

"Robinson, and a large company, contracted with the master of a ship for a passage to Holland. They were to embark at Boston, in Lincolnshire, on a certain day, and from a point agreed upon. The captain was not punctual. At length, however, the vessel arrived; and, under cover of the night, the men, and women, and children, all reached the ship in safety. But the captain was a villain. He betrayed them to the officers of the port. The passengers and their goods were immediately removed from the vessel to several boats in waiting to receive them. All their property was turned over and examined, and not a little of it rifled. The persons of the men were

\* According to Prince, the two churches were one until 1606. In his *New England Chronology* he says, "1606, Oct. The purely reformed church in the north [-east] of England, by reason of the distance of their habitations, are obliged to assemble in two several places, and become two distinct churches, etc."—*Hanbury*, i. 459.

† Ainsworth's Answer to Crashaw, p. 246.

‡ The Pilgrim Fathers, in the *British Quarterly*, No. I. p. 15, 16.



searched, 'even to their shirts;' and the women were treated with indelicacy and rudeness. When these unhappy people reached the town, crowds assembled to gaze upon them, and many mocked and derided them. Nor was their condition improved when brought before the magistrates. Several were bound over to the assizes, and all were committed to prison. Some were released after the confinement of a few weeks, others after a longer period.

"This happened in 1602. In the following spring, Robinson and his friends resolved on making a second attempt of this nature. They made an arrangement for this purpose with a Dutch captain; and their plan now was, that the men should assemble on a large common, between Grimsby and Hull, a place chosen on account of its remoteness from any town; while the women, the children, and the property of these parties, were to be conveyed to that part of the coast in a barque. The men made their way to the place of rendezvous, in small companies, by land. But the barque reached its destination a day before the ship. The swell of the sea was considerable, and as the females were suffering greatly from that cause, the sailors ran the barque into the shelter of a small creek. The next morning the ship arrived, but through some negligence on the part of the seamen, the vessel containing the women, their little ones, and the property, had run aground. The men stood in groups on the shore, and that no time might be lost the captain of the ship sent his boat to convey some of them on board. But by this time so considerable a gathering of people in such a place, and in a manner so unusual, had attracted attention; information had been conveyed to persons of authority in the neighbourhood;

and as the boat which had taken the greater part of the men to the ship was proceeding again towards the shore, the captain saw a large company, armed with swords and muskets, and consisting of horse and foot, advancing towards the point where the barque was still ashore, and where the few remaining men had grouped together. Fearing the consequences of his illicit compact, the captain returned to the ship, hoisted sail, and was speedily at sea. Robinson—honest and able general as he was in every sense—had resolved to be the last to embark. He was a witness, accordingly, of the scene of distress and agony which ensued. The outburst of grief was not to be restrained. Some of the women wept aloud; others felt too deeply, or were too much bewildered, to indulge in utterance of any kind; while the children, partly from seeing what had happened, and partly from a vague impression that something dreadful had come, mingled their sobs and cries in the general lamentation. As the sail of that ship faded away upon the distant waters, the wives felt as if one stroke had reduced them all to widowhood; and every child that had reached the years of consciousness, felt as one who in a moment had become fatherless. But thus dark are the chapters in human affairs in which the good have often to become students, and from which they have commonly had to learn their special lessons. The ship soon encountered foul weather, and after being driven far along the coast of Norway, all hope of saving her being at one time abandoned, she at length safely reached Holland."

It was after this period, or in 1606, that Mr. Smyth, and his church settled in Amsterdam, joining the church under the pastoral care of Francis Johnson. In the

next year Mr. Clyfton, together with a portion of his flock followed, and repaired to the same city, leaving Robinson behind as the pastor of the church, and Mr. William Brewster, "a reverend man, who was afterwards chosen elder." It appears that the motive which induced the parties last mentioned to remain for a season in England was a benevolent one. The difficulties which usually attend the embarkation of numbers were greatly increased by the vindictiveness of "their pursuers;" and Robinson and Brewster thought it their duty to render all the assistance they could to those who were the least capable of making arrangements for their own safety and comfort. They, therefore, "tarried to help the weakest over before them."\* They were so far successful in this, that in the course of the next year they also, with the rest of their flock "got over to Holland," after encountering "great dangers in their passage at sea and in their embarkation," and settled in the same place as those who had preceded them.

At Amsterdám, Robinson appears not to have joined the church under the care of Mr. Clyfton; but to have hired a meeting-house, with the permission of the magistrates, where he and those who were brought over by him met as a distinct church for purposes of worship and fellowship on 'Independent principles. The circumstances of difference which had arisen between Smyth and Clyfton perhaps led to this step; and somewhat later, in order to avoid further contention, he thought it advisable to remove

\* Prince's New England Chronology, p. 254. It is supposed by Hanbury that the excommunication of certain citizens "for resorting unto and praying with Mr. Robinson," hastened his departure at last. Memorials, i. 185.

to another locality. Prince has noted this in his *New England Chronology*, in the following terms:—

“1609. Mr. Robinson’s church having stayed at Amsterdam about a year, seeing Mr. Smyth and his company were fallen into contention with the church that was there before him, and that the flames thereof were like to break out in that ancient church itself—as afterwards lamentably came to pass—which Mr. Robinson and his church prudently foreseeing, they think it best to remove in time, before they were any way engaged in the same; though they knew it would be very much to the prejudice of their outward interest, as it proved to be; yet valuing peace and spiritual comfort above other riches, they therefore with Mr. Robinson, removed to Leyden, about the beginning of the twelve years’ truce between the Dutch and the Spaniards:\* choose Mr. Brewster, assistant to him, in the place of elder, and there live in great love and harmony both among themselves and their neighbour citizens for above eleven years. But the Rev. Mr. Clyfton stays at Amsterdam, and there dies.”†

Before Robinson left Amsterdam he employed his pen in composing one of those masterly defences of the principles he espoused, for which he has since been so highly esteemed. It appears that Bishop Hall, then the “poor rector” of Halstead in Essex, addressed an epistle to “Mr. Smith and Mr. Rob. ringleaders of the late separation; at Amsterdam.” By this designation, he intended Smyth, to whom we have already referred, and Robinson. The epistle itself is full of the falsest charges and imputa-

\* April 9th.

† *New England Chronology*, p. 254.



him—that of separation from the Church of England—he thus expresses himself:—

“The crime here objected is separation, a thing very odious in the eyes of all them from whom it is made, as evermore casting upon them the imputation of evil, whereof all men are impatient. And hence it cometh to pass that the church of England can better brook the vilest persons continuing communion with it, than any whomsoever separating from it, though upon never so just and well grounded reasons. And yet separation from the world, and so from the men of the world, and so from the prince of the world that reigneth in them, and so from whatever is contrary to God, is the first step to our communion with God, and angels, and good men, as the first step to a ladder is to leave the earth !

“The separation we have made, in respect to our knowledge and obedience, is, indeed, ‘late’ and new; yet is it in the nature and cause thereof, as ancient as the gospel, which was first founded in the enmity which God himself put betwixt the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent ; which enmity hath not only been successfully continued, but also visibly manifested by the actual separation of all true churches from the world, in their collection and constitution, before the law, and under the law, and under the gospel. Which separation the church of England neither hath made nor doth make, but stands actually one with all that part of the world within the kingdom, without separation ; for which cause, amongst others, we have chosen, by the grace of God, rather to separate ourselves to the Lord from it, than with it from Him ; in the visible constitution of it.”

Thus nobly does he vindicate himself, and all who imitate his conduct in similar circumstances.

He now takes up the accusation of his being a ring-leader in the following terms :—

“To the title of ‘ringleader,’ wherewith it pleases this ‘pistler to style me, I answer, that if the thing I have be good, it is good and commendable to have been forward in it; if it be evil, let it be reproved by the light of God’s word; and that God, to whom I have done that I have done, will, I doubt not, give me both to see and to heal my error, by speedy repentance; if I have fled away on foot, I shall return on horseback. But as I durst never set foot into this way, but upon a most sound and unresistable conviction of conscience by the Word of God, as I was persuaded, so must my retiring be wrought by more solid reasons, from the same Word, than are to be found in a thousand such pretty pamphlets and formal flourishes as this is.”

Further on, he notices the charge of deserting a church which had nurtured him, and had thus been to him and many besides a good mother church.

“But, the church of England, say you, is our ‘mother,’ and so ought not to be avoided. But, say I, we must not so cleave to holy mother church as [that] we neglect our heavenly Father and His commandments; which, we know, in that estate, we could not but transgress; and that, heinously, and against our consciences; not only in want of many Christian ordinances, to which we were most straitly bound, both by God’s word and our necessities, but also in our most simple subjection to antichristian enormities, which we are bound to eschew as hell. She is our ‘mother;’ so may she be, and yet not the Lord’s wife! Every mo-

ther of children is not a wife. 'Ammi and Ruhamah' were bidden to plead with their mother, apostate Israel; and plead that she was not the Lord's wife, nor he her husband. And though you forbid us a thousand times, yet must we plead. Not to excuse our fault, but to justify our innocency; and that not only, nor so much, in respect of ourselves, as of the truth, which, without sacrilege, we may not suffer to be condemned unheard. And if you yet hear her not, rather blame yourselves as deaf than as dumb. Is not Babylon the mother of God's people; whom He, therefore, commandeth to depart out of her, lest, being partakers of her sins, they also partake of her plagues? And, to conclude, what say you more against us, for your mother, the church of England, than the papists do for their mother, and your mother's mother, the church of Rome, against you, whom they condemn as unnatural bastards and impious matricides, in your separation from her?"

His opinion respecting the worldly character and position of the church of England, is given in the following statement:—

"Your temples, especially your cathedrals and mother churches, stand, still, in their proud majesty, possessed by archbishops and lordbishops, like the flamens and archflamens amongst the Gentiles, from whom they were derived and furnished with all manner of pompous and superstitious monuments; as carved and painted images, massing copes and surplices, chanting and organ music, and many other glorious ornaments of the Romish harlot, by which her majesty is commended to and admired by the vulgar; so far are you in these respects from being gone, or fled, yea, crept either, out of Babylon! Now, if you be thus



Babylonish where you repute yourselves most Sion-like, and thus confounded in your own evidence; what defence could you make in the things whereof an adversary would challenge you? If your light be darkness, how great is your darkness!"

In the next extract, we discern the difference between the independents and puritans. Robinson left the church of England for other reasons than those of her unscriptural ceremonials, although these were bad enough, and he thinks Hall ought to know it.

"On what ground separation, or ceremonies was objected: But for that, not the separation, but the cause, makes the schismatic; and lest you should seem to speak evil of the thing you know not, and to condemn a cause unheard, you lay down, in the next place, the supposed cause of our separation; against which, you deal as insufficiently: and that you pretend to be none other than your consorting with the papists in certain ceremonies, touching which, and our separation in regard of them, thus you write. Master Hall, if you have taken but the least knowledge of the grounds of our judgment and practice, how dare you thus abuse both us and the reader, as if the only or chief ground of our separation were your popish ceremonies? But if you go only by guess, having never so much as read over our treatise, published in our defence, and yet stick not to pass this your censorious doom, both upon us and it; I leave it to the reader to judge, whether you have been more lavish of your censure or credit! Most unjust is the censure of a cause unknown; though, in itself, never so blameworthy; which, nevertheless, may be praiseworthy, for aught he knows that censures it."

In the following passage, Robinson shows that he

knows how to distinguish between "church and state," and the merely inhabiting a country as strangers in it.

"The nearness of the state and church: We, indeed, have much wickedness in the *city* where we live; you, in the *church*: but, in earnest, do you imagine we account the kingdom of England 'Babylon?' or the city of Amsterdam 'Sion?' It is the Church of England, or state ecclesiastical, which we account Babylon, and from which we withdraw in spiritual communion. But for the commonwealth or kingdom, as we honour it above all the states in the world, so would we thankfully embrace the meanest corner in it, at the extremest conditions of any people in the kingdom. The hellish impieties in the city of Amsterdam do no more prejudice our heavenly communion in the church of Christ, than the frogs, lice, murrain, and other plagues over-spreading Egypt, did the Israelites, when Goshen, the portion of their inheritance, was free; nor than the deluge, wherewith the whole world was covered, did Noah, when he and his family were safe in the ark; nor than 'Satan's throne' did the Church of Pergamos, being established in the same city with it."

The following is severe, but not beyond the truth in respect to the condition of England at that period:—

"The air of the gospel which you draw in is nothing so free and clear as you make show. It is only because you are used to it that makes you so judge. The thick smoke of your *canons*, especially of such as are planted against the Kingdom of Christ, the visible church and the administration of it, do both obscure and poison the air which you all draw in, and wherein you breathe. The plaguy spiritual leprosy of sin

rising up in the foreheads of so many thousands in the church, unshut up, uncovered, infects all, both persons and things, amongst you. The blasting hierarchy suffers no good thing to grow or prosper, but withers all, both bud and branch. The daily sacrifice of the Service Book, which—instead of spiritual prayer sweet as incense—you offer up, morning and evening, smells so strong of the pope's *portuis*, as it makes many hundreds, among yourselves, stop their noses at it; and yet you boast of the 'free and clear air of the gospel' wherein you breathe!"

Hall's boast respecting the reputation of the Church of England is thus met:—

"That 'all Christendom should so magnify' your 'happiness,' as you say, is much; and yet yourselves, and the best amongst you, complain so much, both in word and writing, of your miserable condition under the imperious and superstitious impositions of the prelates; yea, and suffer so much also under them, as at this day you do, for seeking the same church government and ministry which is in use in all other churches, save your own! The truth is, you are best liked where you are worst known. Your next neighbours of Scotland know your bishop's government so well as they rather choose to undergo all the misery of bonds and banishment than to partake with you in your 'happiness' this way: so highly do they 'magnify' and 'applaud' the same! Which choice, I doubt not, other churches also would make, if the same necessity were laid upon them! And for your 'graces,' we despise them not, nor any good thing amongst you, no more than you do such graces and good things as are to be found in the Church of Rome, from which you separate notwithstanding. We have, by

God's mercy, the pure and right use of the good gifts and graces of God in Christ's ordinance, which you want. Neither the Lord's people, nor the holy vessels, could make Babylon Sion; though both the one and the other were captived for a time."

The "answer" thus concludes:—

"The terrible threat you utter against us, 'that even whoredoms and murders shall abide an easier answer than separation,' would certainly fall heavy upon us, if this answer were to be made in your consistory courts, or before any of your ecclesiastical judges; but because we know that, not antichrist, but Christ, shall be our judge, we are bold upon the warrant of his word and testament—which being sealed with his blood, may not be altered—to proclaim to all the world, separation from whatsoever riseth up rebelliously against the sceptre of his kingdom; as we are undoubtedly persuaded the communion, government, ministry, and worship of the church of England do!"

Thus did Robinson shew his ability to cope with his adversaries. His reply was not without good results, and even Smyth and Clyfton would feel that Robinson had not left them without rendering them some good service against a common foe.

While Robinson was at Amsterdam he commenced writing another work which deserves special notice. The ability it displays, and the broad and enlightened views it contains respecting the main points in debate between the independents and others, constitute it one of the best defences and expositions of the principles advocated by the former, ever published to the world. It is full of point, and exhibits a mind capable of the greatest logical discrimination. Regarded in

this light, it develops one of Robinson's peculiar excellencies. He was not only able to see the right way for himself, as many others did, but he had great power in stripping off the disguises in which many of the popular errors of the day concealed themselves. None could detect the lurking fallacy more keenly than he. Few could so easily accomplish the somewhat difficult task of unravelling the web of a complicated and false argumentation, and point out in order the very process by which confusion of thought and sentiment are elaborated. In all that Robinson has written, he betrays the skill of a master in this respect.

The work in question was occasioned by a publication issued from the press by a Mr. Bernard, entitled, "The Separatist's Schism; or, the Brownists." The conduct of this person appears to have been marked by great instability. Although a clergyman of the Church of England, he had at one time separated "a hundred voluntary professors" from the rest of his hearers, in order that they might enjoy all the privileges of congregational fellowship according to the institutions of apostolic times. He had even gone so far in his zeal for scriptural principles as to publish a work in defence of nonconformity. Robinson reminds him that he had also sent to him a paper containing his reasons for believing that the bishops of the Church of England were antichristian; and that, although they were not the best reasons that could be adduced, yet they were such as could not be successfully combated, as he very well knew. From some cause, however, he suddenly turned back again,—though not without many compunctions of conscience, according to his own confession,—to his former habits

of conformity. He could not part with his vicarage of Worksop, and so added his name to the list of those who prefer their temporal comfort and reputation to the principles of revealed truth. He is accused by Robinson of saying in his hearing, "Well, I will return home, and preach as I have done; and I must say, as Naaman did, 'The Lord be merciful unto me in this thing.'" Such a man would not be long contented with a silent conformity to a church whose institutions he secretly despised. It is generally the case that such parties seek to bolster up their inconsistency and insincerity by the appearance of great zeal against their former friends. The cry of conscience is stifled by the false and artificial clamour thereby raised, and retribution follows in the shape of a state of feeling that is hardened against the truth. Mr. Bernard, on resolving to return to the bosom of the Church of England, promised his nonconforming friends what he could not perform: namely, that he would never oppose them either by an attack upon their principles, or by endeavouring to prevent others from joining them. The very next sabbath, or "the next but one," he broke his vow, by preaching against both. After this period his zeal grew more and more fierce, until at last it obtained vent in a publication against the separatists, in which they were designated "vipers," "schismatical Brownists," and every thing else a perverted spirit could devise.

Both Smyth and Ainsworth replied, and with great ability, to Bernard's attack upon them. Robinson, however, was not quite satisfied with their performances. His aim was to give a more complete refu-

tation of what had been advanced, examining the particulars one by one, "that so in all points the salve might be answerable to the sore." He entitled his work "A Justification of Separation from the church of England. Against Mr. Richard Bernard, his invective, intituled, 'The Separatists Schism.'" In order that the reader may know how far Robinson understood the principles of Independency, we shall lay before him some of the principal passages of this valuable work.

"For myself," he writes, "as I could much rather have desired to have built up myself, and that poor flock over which the Holy Ghost hath set me, in holy peace,—as becometh the house of God, wherein no sound of axe, or hammer, or other tool of iron, is to be heard,—than thus to enter the lists of contention; so being justly called to contend for the defence of that truth upon which this man, amongst others, lays violent hands, I will endeavour in all good conscience, as before God, so to free the same, as I will be nothing less than contentious in contention, but will count it a victory to be overcome in odious provocations and reproaches, both by him and others. . . . It were no hard thing for our adversaries to oppress us with the multitude of books; considering both how few and how feeble we are in comparison, besides other outward difficulties; if the truth we hold, which is stronger than all, did not support itself."\*

The spirit of Robinson is evinced in such words as these. His entire conduct afterwards was in accordance with the sentiments here expressed. He loved

\* Pp. 6, 8.

peace much, but truth more. Hence we find him, meek-hearted though he was, amongst the foremost controversialists of the day.

Let us now hear his statement respecting the real character of that Independency which he claimed for every congregational church. Bernard had endeavoured to misinterpret the sentiments of the Brownists on this point, as many others have done since. He would have it that Independency was insubordination, and a total exclusion of all official government. Not so, says Robinson; 'we profess the bishops or elders to be the only ordinary governors in the church, as in all other actions of the church's communion, so, also, in the censures. Only *we* may not acknowledge them for 'lords over God's heritage,' 1 Pet. v. 3, as *you* would make them,—'controlling all, but to be controlled by none;' much less essential unto the church, as though it could not be without them; least of all, the church itself, as you would expound, Matt. xviii. But *we* hold the eldership, as other ordinances, given unto the church for her service; and so, the elders or officers, the 'servants and ministers' of the church, 2 Cor. iv. 5; Col. i. 25; the wife, under Christ her husband.'"\*

From this it is evident that Robinson took a correct view of the eldership as being identical with the bishop's office, and intended to answer in a special manner the great purposes of the church's edification. Farther on he opens up his views on the subject more at large. "Wise men," he says, "having written of this subject, have approved as good and lawful, three kinds of polities,—monarchical, where



supreme authority is in the hands of one ; aristocrati- cal, when it is in the hands of some few select persons ; and democrati- cal, in the whole body or multitude. And all these three forms have their places in the church of Christ. In respect of Him, the Head, it is a monarchy ; in respect of the eldership, an aristocracy ; in respect of the body, a popular state.

“Ministers and church-governors have no such authority tied to their office (as civil magistrates have,) but merely to the Word of God. And as the people’s *obedience* stands not in making the elders their lords, sovereigns, and judges, but in listening to their godly counsels ; in following their wise directions ; in receiving their holy instructions, exhortations, consolations, and admonitions ; and in using their faithful service and ministry ; so neither stands the elder’s *government* in erecting any tribunal seat or throne of judgment over the people, but in exhorting, instructing, comforting, and improving them by the Word of God, 1 Tim. iii. 16 ; and in affording the Lord and them their best service. But here it will be demanded of me, if the elders be not set over the church for her guidance and government ? Yes, certainly, as the physician is set over the body, for his skill and faithfulness to minister unto it, to whom the patient, yea, though his lord or master, is to submit ;—the lawyer over his cause, to attend unto it ;—the steward over his family, even his wife and children, to make provision for them ;—yea, the watchmen over the whole city, for the sake of safe keeping thereof. Such, and none other, is the elder’s, or bishop’s government.” \*

\* Pp. 132, 137.

This we believe to be a scriptural view of the kind of government which bishops or elders should have in the church : a moral and spiritual rule, which is divested of all worldly authority, and totally unconnected with every thing like force. In reply to the theory of the church of England—which makes the people mere passive recipients of the doctrine taught by their ministers,—Robinson adds, “ Dare you say, as you have, that the officers are absolutely to the church, as the eyes to the body ; and, that there is no spiritual light, in the rest of the members, save only in them ; and, that all the body besides, and without them, is darkness ? Indeed, such blind beetles, *your* spiritual lords, and you, make your churches ; and so you lead them. But, O you, the people of God, yet in Babylon, ‘ partakers of the heavenly illumination,’ trust not these your seers too much. They would be thought all eye, from top to bottom ; and would make you believe that you, ‘ the multitude,’ are stone blind, and cannot possibly, without them, see one step before you ; that so they might lead you the life whither they list. But open your eyes more and more, and you shall see more and more clearly, that the ways of your national church are not the ways which Christ hath left for his visible churches to walk in, but a very bye-path ; and take heed that these men, which would be thought all and only light, cause not a fog of earthly ordinances to rise upon you, and a dark mist to cover you !” \*

This was a noble appeal, and still worthy of being echoed and re-echoed throughout the length and breadth of the land. Often, since the period in which

\* Page 161.

these words were written, have those "fogs of earthly ordinances" obscured the light of Divine truth in this country; and mainly as the result of yielding too much to the authority of such as hold a merely official place in the churches of Christ.

But other particulars deserve to be noticed. Robinson's views respecting the formation of a Christian church, as depending only on the existence of fitting materials for the purpose, namely, converted persons who may be joined together in holy fellowship, are very different from some that are still entertained by men otherwise enlightened. He has no faith in what is termed, "a historical church;" but great regard for every church based on a spiritual apprehension of the truth. "And for the *gathering of a church*," he writes, "I do tell you, that, in what place soever, by what means soever; whether by preaching the gospel by a true minister, by a false minister, by no minister—or by reading, conference, or any other means of publishing it,—two or three faithful people do arise separating themselves from the world into the fellowship of the gospel, and covenant of Abraham, *they* are a church, truly gathered, though never so weak a house and temple of God, rightly *founded* upon the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, 'Christ himself being the chief corner stone,' against which 'the gates of hell shall not prevail.' " \*

This matter is put yet more strongly in the following passage, in which he shows not only how a church may arise without any dependence upon other parties for its existence, but that it may be under the necessity of acting for a time without any officers, edifying it

self by an interchange of good offices amongst all the members. "The scriptures record, that after Stephen's death, 'all' the church at Jerusalem was 'dispersed,' save the apostles; and that they which were dispersed, 'went everywhere preaching the word;' the effect of whose preaching amongst the Gentiles was the faith and conversion of 'a great number' unto the Lord. Here were not only church-matters, but even churches begun; 'preaching to and fro;' 'turning and joining of multitudes to the Lord,' and that, where neither apostles, nor other officers, were present; for this is too gross to affirm, that during all the apostles' days, nothing was begun but by them! And what if the Lord should now raise up a company of faithful men and women in Barbary, or America, by the reading of the scriptures, or by the writings, conferences, or sufferings of some godly men, must they not separate themselves from the filthiness of the heathen, to the Lord; nor turn from idols to the true God; nor join themselves unto Him in the 'fellowship' of the gospel; nor have any communion together for their mutual edification and comfort, till some vagabond priest from Rome, or England, be sent unto them, to begin their church matters with his service-book? And yet this would not serve the turn either, for he would be unto them 'a barbarian,' and they barbarians unto him. Some years must be spent before each could understand the other's language. Nay, if this were a true ground, that church-matters might not be begun without officers,—it were impossible that such a people should ever either enjoy officers, or become a church; yea, I may safely add, that ever there should be in the world, after the visible apostacy of antichrist, any true church or officers.

No man takes this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as Aaron.' Now, God calls no man ordinarily, but by the church; for I suppose you will not deny but that the choice of officers is a church-matter, and not a matter of the world. And the church must choose none but such as of whose knowledge, zeal, and utterance, they have taken trial of by the exercise of his gifts, as you truly affirm elsewhere; and you will not say, but this exercise of his gifts, after this manner and for this end, is a church-matter. Whence it followeth, that both church-matters, yea, and churches also, may, and in cases must be begun without officers. Yea, even where officers are, if they fail in their duties, the people may enterprise matters needful, howsoever you will have the minister the only *primum movens*,\* and will tie all to his fingers." †

All this is incontrovertibly put, and is consistent with the genius of the gospel dispensation. Robinson knew how to discriminate between mere "order" and what is essential to the efficient discharge of Christian duties. In all his reasonings he never once loses sight of the importance of personal Independency on the part of all Christians. Hence the clearness of his views respecting the limits of official authority, and the responsibility attaching to all members of churches, whether they have the advantage of an official superintendence or not. The following passage is worthy of serious consideration by all the members of Christian churches in the present day.

"Christ Jesus, the King and Lord of his church,

\* Prime mover.

† Page 139.

hath set in it certain sorts and orders of officers, rightly fitted, and furnished with graces, for the reparation of the saints, and edification of his body to the world's end. This we affirm as loud as you, and with more comfort. You, in bringing it, have only lighted a candle, whereby to discover your own nakedness. You would conclude, that therefore no brethren, out of office, may meddle with the reparation and edification of the saints, or church. I do acknowledge that only apostles, prophets, etc., by office, and as works of their ministry, are to look to the reparation and edification of the body; but, that the brethren out of office are discharged of those duties I deny, any more than the rest of the 'servants' were of watching, though out of office, because 'the porter' alone was by office, 'to watch.' Mark xiii. 34, 37. Yea, look what is laid upon the officers in this place, after a more special manner by virtue of their office,—that also is laid upon the rest of the brethren elsewhere, in the same words, to be performed in their places as a duty of love, for which they have not only liberty, but charge from the Lord. The officers are here charged with the reparation or knitting together of the saints; the same duty, in the same words, is imposed upon every 'brother spiritual,' Gal. vi. 1.; and I hope you, the ministers, will not be the only spiritual men in the church. Secondly, the officers are here given to 'edify' the body: the same duty, in the same terms, is laid upon every one of the 'brethren' in their places, 1 Thess. v. 11.; and unto these few might be added a hundred places of the same nature. Why, then, should the ministers of the Lord, or any other for their sake, *envy* 'the Lord's people' either their graces or their liberty; or thus arrogate all unto

themselves, as though all knowledge were treasured up in their breasts, all power given into their hands, and as though no drop of grace, for edification or comfort of the church, could fall from elsewhere than from their 'lips.' Moses wished that 'all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them;' and Paul gives liberty to 'the whole church,' and to 'all' in it, women excepted, to 'prophecy one by one,' for the instruction, edification, and comfort of all. But with Mr. Bernard and his church, I perceive neither Moses' prayer, nor Paul's grant, nor God's Spirit, must be available, or find acceptance for edification by any save the ministers. The subjects of kings used to complain of monopolies, but the subjects of the Lord Jesus have greater cause of complaint; that He, himself, his presence, power, and graces, wherewith he honour-eth 'all' his saints, are thus monopolized and engrossed." \*

Again, in another place, he adds, "In the church, all and every ordinance concerns every person, as a part of their communion,—without the dispensation of necessity—for their use and edification; all the officers to be chosen by suffrages and consent of the 'multitude.' The brethren are to admonish their brethren of every violation of God's commandment; and so, in order, to 'tell the church,' and to see the parties reformed; to observe and to take notice of the officers' carriage and ministration; and to 'say to Archippus,' as there is need, 'Take heed to thy ministry, that thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfil it;' and if the ministers will deal corruptly, and

so persevere in the spirit of profaneness, heresy, idolatry, or atheism, to censure, depose, reject, or avoid them. Otherwise, they betray their own souls and salvation." \*

After this, we are not surprised to hear Robinson assert the church's right and duty to choose its own officers, in the following terms:—

"The bond between the minister and people, is the most strait and near bond that may be; and, therefore, not to be entered but with mutual consent. It makes much, both for the provocation of the minister unto all diligence and faithfulness; and also for his comforts in all the trials and temptations which befall him in his ministry, when he considereth how the people unto whom he ministereth have committed that rich treasure of their souls, in the Lord—yea, I may say, of their very 'faith' and 'joy,' to be *helped* forward unto salvation—to his care and charge, by their free and voluntary choice of him. It much furthers the love of the people to the person of their minister, and so, consequently, their obedience unto his doctrine and government, when he is such a one as *themselves*, in duty unto God and love of their own salvation, *have made choice of*; as, on the contrary, it leaves them without excuse, if they either perfidiously forsake or unprofitably use such a man's holy service and ministration. Lastly, it is agreeable to all equity and reason that all free persons and estates should choose their own servants, and them unto whom they give wages, and maintenance for their labour and service. But so it is betwixt the people and ministers; the people a free people, and the church a free estate



spiritual, under Christ the King; the ministers, the church's, as Christ's, servants; and so by the church's provision to 'live,' and of her, as 'labourers,' to receive wages."\*

On the subject of "ordination," Robinson's views are clear and discriminating. He knows how to value it on the ground of order, and how to estimate aright that false value which is attached to it by the church of England. "We acknowledged," he says, "that in the right and *orderly* state of things, no ministers are to be ordained but by ministers, the latter by the former, in the churches where they are, and one which the Holy Ghost hath set them." Further on he adds, "The prelates, and those which level by their line, do highly advance ordination, and far above the administration of the word, sacraments, and prayer; making it and the power of excommunication, the two incommunicable prerogatives of a *bishop*, in their understanding, above an ordinary minister. But surely herein these chief ministers do not succeed the chief ministers, the apostles, except as darkness succeeds light; and antichrist's confusion, Christ's order. When the apostles were sent out by Christ, there was no mention of ordination; their charge was to 'go, teach all nations, and baptize them;' and that the apostles accounted preaching their principal work, and after it baptism and prayer, the scriptures manifest. And if ordination had been, in those days, so prime a work, surely Paul would rather have tarried in Crete himself, to have ordained elders there, and have sent Titus, an inferior officer, about that inferior work of preaching, than have gone himself about that, leaving Titus for the other."†

\* Page 375.

† Page 412.

In selecting the above extracts from this valuable treatise, we have aimed at giving Robinson's views respecting the congregational polity only. Many other matters are touched upon which we have omitted. It is right, however, that two additional passages should be adduced; the one illustrative of the light in which he regarded the sanction and patronage of the state in matters of a religious nature; and the other pertaining to the divisions which sprang up amongst the Independents themselves, and which were frequently urged as an objection to their peculiar church polity. The first is as follows:—

“I doubt not but Mr. Bernard, and a thousand more ministers in the land,—were they secure of the magistrate's sword, and might they go on with his good licence,—would wholly shake off their canonical obedience to their ordinaries, and neglect their citations and censures, and refuse to sue in their courts, for all ‘the peace of the church’ which they commend to us for so sacred a thing! Could they but obtain license from the magistrate to use the ‘liberty’ which they are persuaded Christ hath given them, they would soon shake off the prelate's yoke, and draw no longer under the same, in spiritual communion with all the profane in the land; but would break those bonds of iniquity, as easily as Samson did the cords wherewith Dalilah tied him, and give good reasons also, from the Word of God, for their so doing. And yet the approbation of men and angels makes the ways of God and works of religion never a whit the more lawful, but only the more free from bodily danger. Whereupon we, the weakest of all others have been persuaded to embrace this truth of our

Lord Jesus Christ, though in great and manifold afflictions, and to hold out his testimony as we do, though without approbation of our sovereign, knowing that as his approbation, in such points of God's worship as his Word warranteth not, cannot make them lawful; so neither can his disallowance make unlawful such duties of religion as the Word of God approveth; nor can he give dispensation to any person to forbear the same." \*

The other passage respecting the dissensions alleged to have sprung up amongst the Brownists, refers to parallel cases in other churches, both in ancient and later times, and argues thence that the objection is invalid as advanced against the separatists. "But I take," he says, "no delight in writing these things; neither do I think the needless dissensions which have been amongst us, the less evil because they are so common to us with others; but these things I have laid down, to make it appear that Mr. Bernard here useth none other weapon against us than Jews and pagans might have done against Christians, and papists against such as held the truth against them; yea, and than atheists . . might take up against all the professions and religions in the world. . . Touching the 'heavy sentence' of excommunication, by which 'the father and brother were delivered up to the devil,' as Mr. Bernard speaketh, I desire the reader to consider . . the Church of England is in heavy case, which plays with excommunications as children do with rattles. And, to allude to the word Mr. Bernard useth, in what a 'devilish' case are either the prelates and convocation-house which have, *ipso facto*, excommunicated all that speak or deal against their

state, ceremonies, and service-book, since the curse causeless falls upon the head of him from whom it comes; or the Reformists, whereof Mr. Bernard would be one by fits, and such as seek for and enterprize reformation?" \*

Such are the principal features of Robinson's treatise.

It remains to be noticed, that in one part of it he ventures on a prophecy respecting the future advancement of Christ's cause in connexion with the Independent order of church organization, which came to be realized. "Let it be," he says, "as Mr. Bernard would have it, that the cause of religion is to be measured by the multitude of them that profess it, yet must it further be considered, that religion is not always sown and reaped in one age. 'One soweth and another reapeth,' John iv. 37. . . The many that are already gathered, by the mercy of God, into the kingdom of his Son Jesus, and the nearness of many more through the whole land, for 'the regions are white unto the harvest,' do promise *within less than a hundred years*, if our sins and theirs make not us and them unworthy of this mercy, a very plenteous harvest!" †

Although this work was commenced at Amsterdam, it was not published until 1610, a year or so after Robinson had settled at Leyden. It devolves upon us now to notice the condition of the church under his care, and the influence which he exerted on his adopted town from this period.

It appears that the removal from Amsterdam was a wise step, and attended with happy results. According to the statement quoted a little way back, great

\* Page 56.

† Page 62.

love and harmony prevailed, not only amongst the members of the church, but between them and their neighbours. Both Robinson and Brewster were highly esteemed by the clergy and leading persons of the town. No disputes occurred that in any way reflected on the Christian character and principles of the Independents. And it was thus proved, that the laws of Christ, as developed in the apostolic institutions of the New Testament, are capable of being acted upon universally, wherever there is the cultivation of genuine piety and a Christian spirit.

From time to time, various parties "from divers parts of England" joined the Congregational church at Leyden, until they became somewhat numerous. The author of the New England Chronology says, that "they grew a great congregation." It is probable, however, that they never exceeded two or three hundred. Whatever might be the accessions to the church, we do not find that any had the disposition to disturb the peace of the little community. Under the joint care of two ministers so highly esteemed, and by whom the principles pertaining to Christian fellowship and charity were so faithfully and scripturally expounded, all was prosperity and peace. It is probable that the greater part of those who joined them came from the eastern counties of England, where the principles of Brownism had most widely spread; and hence were prepared to fall in with all the peculiarities of the system advocated by the Independents of Leyden.

A proof of the high esteem in which Robinson's talents were held by the most eminent of his fellow-townsmen, is furnished by the circumstance of his being put forward by them, somewhat against his

will, as the advocate of evangelical truth, in a time of public excitement, occasioned by doctrinal controversy. In 1812, the university of Leyden was divided, in the person of two of its professors, on the subject of grace and free-will. Episcopius advocated the Arminian scheme, and Polyander the Calvinistic. Such was the contention that all parties were more or less involved in the dispute, and great bitterness of feeling was occasioned. The favourers of the one professor would scarcely give a hearing to the other, and thus the controversy was likely to be indefinitely prolonged. Robinson was not uninterested in these proceedings. As a lover of truth he was above all party feelings; and although fully occupied by his public duties, both of the pulpit and of the press, made a point of hearing both sides. "Whereby," says Prince, "he is well-grounded in the controversy; sees the force of all their arguments; knows the shifts of the Arminians; and, being himself otherwise very able, none is fitter to engage them, as appears by sundry disputes, so as he begins to be terrible to the Arminian party." \* In the course of the following year Episcopius published some theses, which he avowed himself willing to defend against all opposers. Polyander and the "chief preachers of the city" were alarmed by this bold challenge, feeling themselves unequal to the task of meeting so subtle an adversary. But they had the merit of not thinking of themselves "more highly than they ought to think," and were the last to rest the truth of their principles on their own ability to espouse them against a powerful debater. In these circumstances

\* New England Chronology.

they applied to Robinson, convinced that he was fully equal to the task from which they shrank. Robinson was not wanting in self-confidence, although a man of great meekness and prudence, and felt himself quite prepared to engage in the controversy. But, as a stranger in the town, he was reluctant to comply with the request. To this they replied, that the truth was in danger, and was likely to suffer, if he did not come forth in its defence, accepting the challenge, and meeting Episcopus in public. After much solicitation Robinson yielded, and engaged in the controversy on two or three occasions, with success. "When the day comes," says the authority before referred to, "he so defends the truth, and foils the opposer, as he puts him to an apparent *nonplus* in this great and public audience. The same he does a second or third time, upon the like occasions; which as it causes many to give praise to God that the truth had so famous a victory, so it procures Mr. Robinson much respect and honour from those learned men and others: and it is said by some of no mean note, that were it not for giving offence to the State of England, they would prefer him, if he pleased, and allow his people some public favour." \*

While this controversy was pending at Leyden, other controversies of a different kind were dividing the infant cause at Amsterdam. These originated with various parties, and were conducted on different grounds.

The first was occasioned by Mr. Smyth, to whom a reference has already been made. "His theological sentiments," says Dr. Price, "which were very similar to those espoused by Arminius, became the occasion

\* Ibid.

of unhappy collision with his brethren. But his views on the subject of baptism were still more obnoxious, and awakened an angry and fierce controversy, in which the sacredness of character and the charity of the gospel were alike disregarded." \* It is not our intention to enter into the peculiar merits of this controversy, any further than is needful in order to the purpose of our history. Whether the views of the anti-pædo baptists are right or wrong, does not concern us in relation to the principles of Independency. If, however, the views of Mr. Smyth were such as he has stated, it is evident that there was no alternative but that of his separating himself from the church at Amsterdam, or being separated by them.† "Be it

\* Hist. of Nonconformity, i. 495. Dr. Price adds in a note, "Mr. Smith's enemies charged him with various singular notions; as, that it was unlawful to read the Scriptures in public worship; that no translation of the Bible was the Word of God; that singing the praises of God was unlawful, etc. The quarter whence these charges emanate involves them in suspicion." In making these last statements the author seems to depart from his usual course of impartiality. In respect to the first two charges, they are made good by Smyth's own words. Hanbury, i. 180, 181. And as to the last, it is admitted by Ivimey, in his Hist. of the Baptists, vol. ii. p. 374, that "the prejudices against singing were general among the baptists."

† Dr. Price endeavours to make it appear that Smyth's expulsion from the Brownist church, "cannot be justified without an admission of the principle on which religious persecution is based;" and that "the right which it assumed involved, though in a more subtle form, the same spirit as had reigned in the councils of Whitgift and Bancroft," i. 496. This appears to us very unjust, admitting, as we do, that differences of opinion on minor points are perfectly consistent with the fellowship of the saints, we still ask, whether that can be termed a "minor point" which unchurches a Christian people? How could Smyth with any consistency wish to be retained by a church which he declared "to be



known," he writes, "to all the separation, that we account them, in respect of their constitution, to be as very a harlot as either her mother England or her grandmother Rome is, out of whose loins she came; and although once in our ignorance we have acknowledged her a true church, yet now, being better informed, we revoke that our erroneous judgment, and protest against her, as well for her false constitution as for her false ministry, worship, and government. The true constitution of the church is of a new creature baptized into the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; the false constitution is of infants baptized. We profess, therefore, that all those churches that baptize infants are of the same false constitution; and all those churches that baptize the new creature, those that are made disciples by teaching men, confessing their faith and their sins, are of one true constitution; and therefore the church of the separation, being of the same constitution with England and Rome, is a most unnatural daughter to her mother England and her grandmother Rome, who, being of the self-same genealogy and generation, dare, notwithstanding, most impudently wipe her own mouth, and call her mother and grandmother adulteresses. Herein, therefore, we do acknowledge our error, that we, retaining the baptism of England which gave us our constitution, did

as very a harlot as either her mother England or her grandmother Rome?" So long as pædo-baptists and anti-pædo-baptists regard baptism as a rite respecting which a difference of opinion may exist without affecting their church constitution, they may remain together in the same church fellowship. But when either the one or the other party make their mode of administering the rite a thing *essential* to church constitution, as Smyth did, there can be fellowship in the same church no longer.

call our mother England a harlot, and, upon a false ground, made our separation from her ; for although it be necessary that we separate from England, yet no man can separate from England as from a false church, except he also do separate from the baptism of England, which giveth England her constitution ; and whosoever doth retain the baptism of England, doth withal retain the constitution of England, and cannot, without sin, call England a harlot, as we have done ; and this we desire may be well minded of all that separate from England ; for, if they retain the baptism of England, viz., the baptism of infants as true baptism, they cannot separate from England as from a false church, though they may separate from corruption ; and whosoever doth separate from England as from a false church, must needs separate from the baptism of England as from false baptism. For the baptism of England cannot be true and to be retained, and the Church of England false, and to be rejected ; neither can the Church of England possibly be false, except the baptism be false, unless a true constitution could be in a false church. Therefore, the separation must either go back to England, or go forward to true baptism. And all that shall in time to come separate from England, must separate from the baptism of England ; and if they will not separate from the baptism of England, there is no reason why they should separate from England as from a false church.” \*

It is not surprising, that with such views as these,

\* The character of the Beast, or the False Constitution of the Church Discovered, etc. Epistle to the Reader, i. 3.

—views that completely unchurched the congregation of believers, of which Smyth formed a part,—there should be a separation between Smyth and the rest. The fault lay, not with the church, but with the party whose principles of necessity excluded him from all church communion with them. The only course open to him was, either to win the church over to his views, or to set up a church of his own. Not being able to accomplish the former, he adopted the latter alternative, in conjunction with a Mr. Helwisse, who afterwards became celebrated as the founder of the first Baptist church in London. But now a difficulty arose, respecting the commencement of a church, whose very basis should be baptism. The baptism of the Church of England was invalid; and for one of them to baptise the other, would be for an unbaptised person, having no church standing, to perform functions pertaining to the church. Mr. Smyth, to avoid this dilemma, baptised himself, and was afterwards designated as a se-baptist. In justification of this practice he used the following argument. “If all the commandments of God must be obeyed, then this of baptism, and this warrant is sufficient for assuming baptism. Now, for baptising a man’s self, there is as good warrant as for a man’s churching himself; for two men, singly, are no church; jointly, they are a church; and they jointly put a church upon themselves; for as both these persons unchurched, yet have power to assume the church, each of them for himself and others in communion, so each of them unbaptised, hath power to assume baptism for himself, with others, in com-

munion."\* After he had thus baptised himself, Mr. Smyth baptised Helwisse, and others who had joined them; and thus a baptist church was formed at Amsterdam.

In what light Robinson regarded these and other proceedings, we shall see in another chapter.

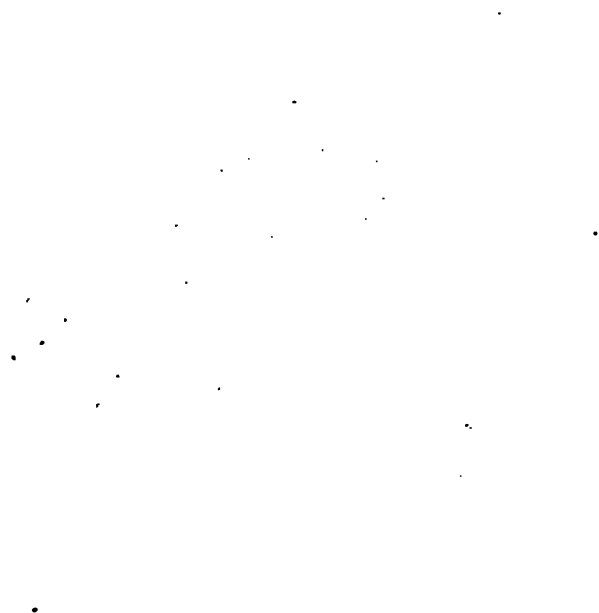
\* The character of the Beast, etc. p. 58.

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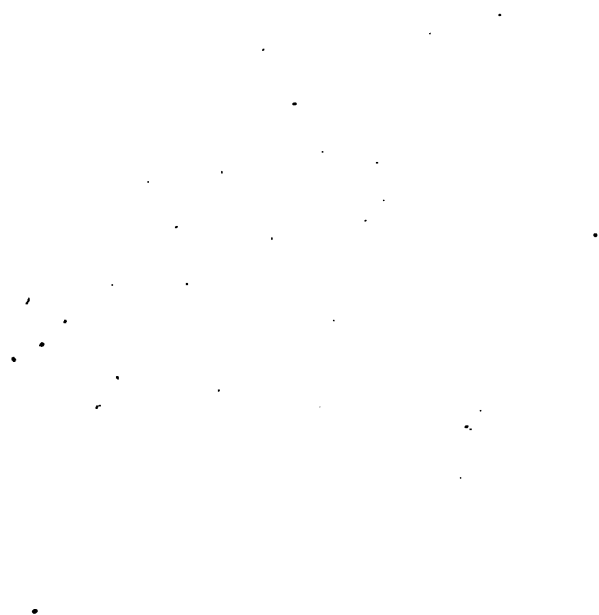










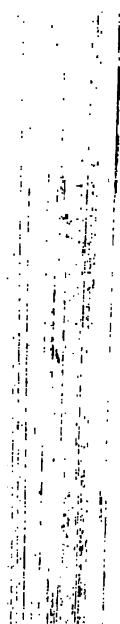






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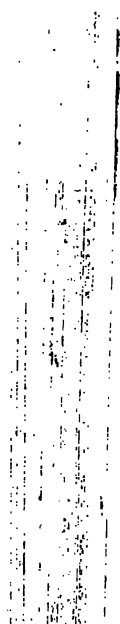






1. The first part of the document is a list of names and dates, which appears to be a record of some kind. The names are written in a cursive script, and the dates are in a more formal, printed style. The list is organized into two columns, with names on the left and dates on the right. The names are: John Smith, James Brown, William Jones, and Thomas White. The dates are: 1810, 1811, 1812, and 1813. The list is followed by a section of text that is also written in cursive. This text appears to be a description of the events that took place during the period covered by the list. It mentions the names of the individuals listed and describes their actions and the circumstances surrounding them. The text is written in a clear, legible hand, and it is organized into paragraphs. The first paragraph describes the events of 1810, the second paragraph describes the events of 1811, the third paragraph describes the events of 1812, and the fourth paragraph describes the events of 1813. The text is followed by a final section of text that appears to be a summary or conclusion of the document. This text is also written in cursive and is organized into a single paragraph. The document is a historical record, and it provides a detailed account of the events that took place during the period covered by the list. The names and dates are written in a cursive script, and the text is written in a clear, legible hand. The document is organized into sections, and it is easy to read and understand.







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